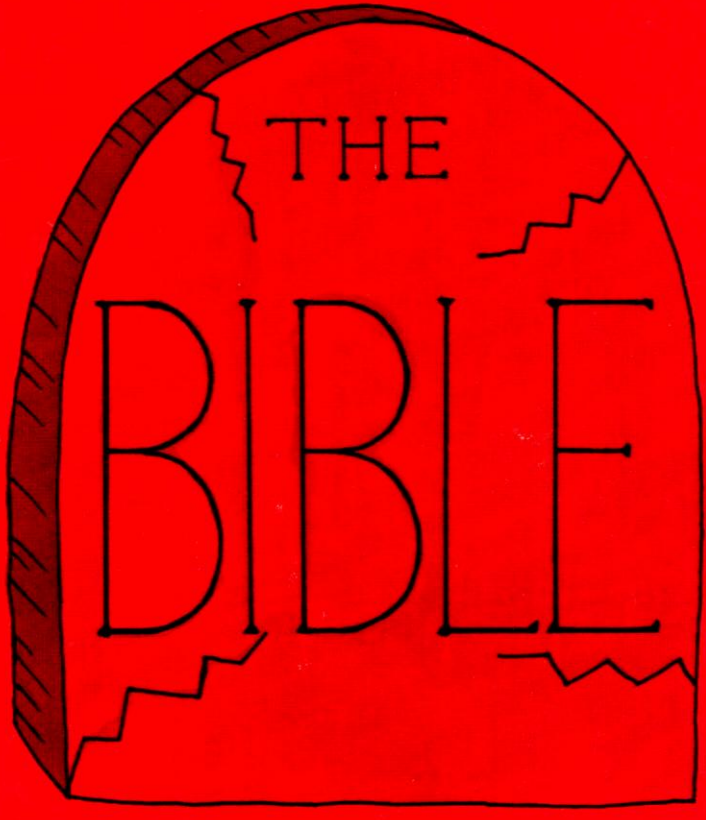
THE LATE GREAT BOOK



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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The Bible is a volume of miscellaneous character. It was written by many authors, some of whose names are said to be known and others unknown. It contains poetry, history, legends, myths, philosophy, ethics, prophecy, parable and superstition. Good and bad, beautiful and ugly, savage and tender, are haphazardly mixed up in its pages. It is also a very large book (or volume of books), and therefore it is easily read in an uncritical spirit.

The object of this work—THE LATE GREAT BOOK: THE BIBLE—is certainly not orthodox, and the general body of believers in the Christian-Judaic system will doubtless object to its somewhat satirical, occasionally breezy, mostly critical methods. They will probably condemn the approach as being unfair.

But the apologists for the Christian Scriptures have been occupied for so long in heaping adulation on them, that there is no necessity to duplicate their performance, aside from the most casual references. On the contrary, it is about time that something of an opposite description, and in a modern vein, be produced; and that is precisely what has been attempted here.

Admittedly, not the best, but the worst things in the Bible have been selected: its self-contradictions, its absurdities, its immoralities, its indecencies, and its brutalities—and these things lead inexorably to the self-contradictions, the absurdities, the immoralities, the indecencies, and the brutalities in Christianity (just as the obsessive religious formalism of the Jews leads inevitably to the repressive horrors of Christendom).

It would be grossly unfair to disembowel an ordinary book—Shakespeare, or any other great classic, either of modern times or of antiquity—in this manner. But the Bible is not an ordinary book. It has been stamped as God's Word by government power, not once, but many times over the centuries. It has been forced into the hands of children, not only in the homes, but until recently, also in the schools. It has been used for ages as a kind of fetish for swearing upon in Courts of Law and Houses of Legislation. At one time, to refuse to be bound by its precepts meant death by the most horrible means. Remember the words of Erasmus? "Heresy is a greater crime than impurity of life."

The Bible is the Holy word of an ever-existing God, we are told; it is the most unique book in all history. Supposedly, it is God's word which was given to us so that our lives might be changed . . . It tells about God and His will for our lives . . . It is the Master's voice, an instruction manual *from* the Creator *to* the created . . . It is a record of God's deeds in time and space . . . a record of God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ . . . a record of the redemptive acts He has performed on behalf of a fallen race.

The Bible is a book of origins, we are told; it explains where man came from, why he was put on this earth, and where he is going. Supposedly, the Bible speaks with enduring authority of truths that are true yesterday, today and forever . . . It sets the highest moral and philosophical standards

of human conduct you can find anywhere . . . All we have to do is to accept the Bible, and we will have stars to steer by . . . principles that are fixed . . . goals that are reachable.

But most important of all, according to many believers, the Bible foretells the future; it reveals insights far in advance of its day. Nearly one-fourth of the Bible is supposedly composed of predictive material. Prophecy, we are told, is "history written in advance"—*before* it happens. The end of the world as we know it (the "end time") is coming, perhaps in our lifetimes. The second return of Christ to planet earth will soon occur. A new society with Jesus-in-person ruling as King is not far off. And the great predicted battle between Magog (Russia?) and Israel is nearly upon us. How do we know? The Bible tells us so.

And when we learn about these things, we are asked to accept them on practically a trained-seal level of ideological sycophancy. And should we refuse, we are unctuously informed that only the cruel and unfeeling person would stoop to the task of disturbing the ordinary opinions and reverence of society toward the Bible.

On the other hand, a book which makes, or has made for it, such extraordinary pretensions should be subjected to extraordinary tests; although it is never very difficult to find flaws in something that is said to be perfect. It is a requisite, although thankless task, therefore, to accentuate the false, foolish and wicked features of the Bible, as an antidote to the adulation of its blind devotees and bubbling flatterers.

But the Bible, *per se,* is not the be-all and the end-all of this inquiry. It is merely the *starting* point—the all-important path leading to more pertinent and revealing questions: What is Christianity? What is Judaism? Who are the Christians? Who are the Jews? Did Jesus of Nazareth live? What is Jesus the Christ? What lies behind the childish mythology that dominates our metaphysical view of the world? What happened to the creative and brilliant mind of *Western* man when he succumbed to the obsessive patriarchy of an *oriental* religion? What happened when he rejected the achievements of the world's greatest thinkers for the revelations of wild-eyed prophets and a gospel of worldly renunciation?

And so we must begin at the beginning—with the Scriptures, the Holy Bible: the BOOK that has probably cost us more than anything else ever *adopted* and *molded* by the minds and consciences of our people; the BOOK that has more than any other thing contributed so much that has been retrogressive and perverse to the peoples of the Western world; that amazing BOOK of books that finds it so easy to lunge from the obscene and the absurd ("Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces . . ." Malachi 2:2), to the realm of the poetic and the sublime ("So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter . . ." Ecclesiastes 4:1).

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CHAPTER ONE

The Kickoff

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

(Genesis 1:31.)

And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

(Genesis 6:6.)

It was in the beginning, it seems, that the whole thing started—heaven and earth and all that, I mean.

In the beginning, somebody named GOD—often referred to in the vernacular of our contemporaries as "the man upstairs," "that quarterback up there calling the signals," and "the master gaffer," and the like—conjured up the whole works and set it in motion. (According to Lucretius, "Nothing is ever by divine power produced from nothing." But you couldn't prove it by me.)

Since "the earth was without form," and "the face of the deep" was darker than twelve shades the other side of midnight, God decided to "move upon the face of the waters" and throw a little light upon the subject.

So God created light and He called it Day and the Darkness He called Night; then God decided that there should be a "firmament in the midst of the waters," so He divided the "waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which *were* above the firmament," and He called the firmament Heaven; then God gathered the waters under heaven "together in one place so that dry *land* would appear," and the land He called Earth and the water He called Seas.

And that wasn't the half of it.

He went on and on like that, conjuring up herbs and seeds and vegetables and plants and trees and greater lights and lesser lights and every kind of living creature that moveth and flieth and swimmeth and creepeth over and under and upon the earth.

For a more flowing and rhythmical description of God's handiwork, I defer momentarily to *The First Mortgage,* better known as "The Rhyming Bible," written by E. U. Cook and published in 1898:

God made the grasses then to grow, and made the balmy breezes blow,

He made the sun to give us light, the moon to shine for us at night.
He then did work at things like these: made fish with fins to swim the seas,
Horses, cows and Indian ponies, and whales to swallow up the Jonahs.
Made reptiles, worms and creeping things, made some without, and some with wings,
Made dogs to bark and cats to mew, made our colors red, white and blue. [A little patriotic note there.]
Made the cyclone and the zephyr, the wild bull and the domestic heifer.
Made the flowers and forest trees, He made the bugs and bumble bees.
Away out there alone, above, without a thing to make it of,
The world was made without a flaw, without a hammer or a saw.

It took the Jewish God only *seven* days (including the day on which He ended His work and began to rest) to do most of it; and in no time at all, He started to regret it.

That is where MAN comes in . . .

CHAPTER TWO

Adam and Deceive

A God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he.

(Deuteronomy 32:4.)

For I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation . . .

(Exodus 20:5.)

It seems that God had left something out. After all, whales and ducks and bees and things are just not equipped to wield plows and hoes. Hence . . . MAN.

Whatever this distressed mortal thinks he is doing now, I don't know. But it so happens he was thought up to be a soil tiller: ". . . and *there was* not a man to till the ground . . .," which called for a little instantaneous sculpting on God's part—according, that is, to the most intriguing version of the creation of Eve's better half (Genesis 2:5–7); whereupon the Jewish God "formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." E. U. Cook's version of this creative act is a bit more down to earth:

> *And in accordance with his plan, He took some dirt and made a man.*

Chauvinistic discourses to the contrary notwithstanding, man was put into God's special garden (planted "eastward in Eden") to till it and keep it. So he shouldn't think that *he* is such hot stuff.

Then God made his second mistake. He took woman *out* of man (somehow I feel it should have been the other way around; but let that go): "And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought he unto the man." (This is the tale the Women's Libbers refer to with some derision as "the rib story.")

And so it came to pass that the man was named Adam and Adam named his wife Eve because she was the "mother of all the living," and he called her Woman because she was taken out of man. "And they were both naked, the man and the wife, and were not ashamed." (How about that? The first nudist colony!)

When Adam was created—so claimed the jubilant rabbis who later sang

the praises of the very first member of the species *Homo Sapiens*—all the angels had to bow to the new king of the earth. So there he was, Adam, the monarch of the earth, uncorrupted, innocent, eminently holier-than-thou, made in the very image of God: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him . . ." And what happened? Degradation, that's what happened. Betrayal! Deceit! Yea verily, calumny!

Adam was dragged down into the bowels of sin and degradation by a woman, by none other than Eve herself, the BITCH OF EDEN—as she was later to be christened by various and sundry indignant members of the Christian Establishment—*her secret parts burning with the white-hot heat of temptation and sin.*

Eve, we must assume, was an uppity type who wasn't above spitting in the heavenly eye—with a little help from an underrated serpent who seemed to know that omnipotence could be overthrown by a seductive broad and an apple core.

"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made."

Well, it soon comes to pass that this subtle serpentine fellow finds an occasion to slither up to Eve for the purpose of inquiring if she had been forbidden by God to eat of the fruit of one of the trees in the Garden of Eden.

Eve admits that she was aware of God's rather unique *caveat,* of course. (Why should she lie?) Whereupon the serpent plants a bug in Eve's ear to the effect that she shouldn't be all that impressed with God, that He was just a big flake at best who couldn't be trusted—or something along those lines. The serpent, the Christian Establishment tells us, was really *Satan* in one of his many disguises—a very appropriate one, to be sure, since the serpent is the "most subtle of beasts." (I don't know why; it could be his beady eyes.)

Anyway, Eve, in a fit of deceit, inspired by the "deceiving serpent" (which the Jewish God had created and put in the Garden of Eden in the first place), sneaked out on her husband and "took of the fruit thereof, and did eat"—which wasn't enough to satisfy her apparently because back she came with her mouth "smoother than oil" (to use wise old King Solomon's pertinent phraseology) and "gave unto her husband; and he did eat."

Contrary to a popular and contemporary but shady bent of contemplation, sex did not rear its ugly head and screw up things for Adam and Eve. God very clearly gave Adam to understand—*before* "the fruit thereof" business—that a man should leave his mother and father and "cleave unto a woman and become one flesh with her." Now I don't know what that means to you; but I don't intend to risk my reputation as a "dirty old man" by trying to pretend that it doesn't mean what I think it means. (At this point a question could be raised about Adam's father and mother; but I don't suppose it would do any good.)

Well, one day God went walking in the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve heard His voice (I guess He was talking to Himself) and they promptly hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the Garden.

When God didn't find His favorite tenants, He called to Adam and said

unto him, "Whither goest thou, Adam?"—or words to that effect.

"I heard thy voice in the garden," answered Adam, "and I hid myself because I was naked and afraid."

"Ahhhhh HA!" said the Lord. "AND WHO TOLD THEE THAT THOU WAST NAKED?"

"I hearkened to the voice of my wife," answered Adam (the tattletale), "and disobeyed you and ate of the fruit thereof." In case you are wondering, "the fruit thereof" was the *forbidden fruit*—the fruit of the tree of knowledge—about which God had said, "Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

Well, that did it. The story was out; the fat was in the fire.

Because Adam "hearkened to the voice of his wife" and disobeyed God, God got very "wroth" and kicked him out of Eden, condemning him forever after—along with all his luckless descendants (including us, kids)—to life on a rotating graveyard encrusted with thorns and storms, thistles and syphilis, expectorating and defecating, and signs proclaiming, "The 'UN' also rises!" (Don't sweat it if you're not familiar with the late, ungreat, Uncola commercial.)

"And take that bitch with you!" God ordered.

God got even with the serpent, too.

"Because thou hast done this," the Jewish God said unto the serpent, "thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life . . ." Now *that,* you must admit, is not just an everyday run-of-the-mill curse; and one, I might add, that prompts a question or two: How did serpents move *before* they were condemned to go on their bellies? And why don't serpents eat dust today in fulfillment of that curse? (And *please* don't tell me they do so in the sense in which we all eat our peck of dust before we die.)

A moment more for "The Rhyming Bible."

The author, E. U. Cook, describes the Fall of Man as the Devil taking a mortgage on Adam's soul—hence the title, *The First Mortgage*. Obviously disquieted by the moral descent of God's personally molded creatures, Cook attempted to solve the problem with the following rhyme:

> *And many other things did make, and in them all made one mistake;*
> *But this was no mistake in plan. The dirt was bad when He made man.*

E. U. Cook's poetic exercise in reasoning was designed to remove us from the horns of the dilemma regarding the creation of an imperfect creature by a perfect creator. But it merely hoisted us by the petard of another perplexity. We are to suppose, I suspect, that God who created everything else didn't create that particular patch of bad dirt. From whence then did it come? Or . . . if He did create that particular patch of bad dirt, why did He do so in the first place? Or . . . why didn't He just use a patch of *good* dirt instead of a patch of *bad* dirt? Or . . .

Anyway, *The First Mortgage* never won many readers; but that shouldn't

come as too much of a surprise. (I think the author deserves an "A" for effort though.)

Before abandoning the subject of dirt it might be worthwhile to remind the reader that he (or she) could well be a soul brother (or sister) to the beast and the fowl, since Genesis reveals that these creatures were *also* created out of dirt. "And *out of the ground* the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air." (Not that there's any use making a fuss about it; no one else has.)

It occurs to me now that another point of contention had best be examined (but not necessarily explained): I'm referring to those cryptic angels who had to *bow* to the "new king of the earth," Adam. From whence did *they* come? And what of that curious chap Satan—mentioned earlier—who, as any Christian will fondly preach, was instrumental in underwriting the chaos in paradise? Just when did God create that obnoxious cherubic spirit who became a "fallen" angel? Absolutely nothing is said in chapters One, Two and Three of Genesis about the *creation* of *angels*! What of that subtle fellow the serpent though, since the Bible makes it abundantly clear that the Jewish God created everything that "moveth upon the earth" other than man *before* He decided He needed a human cultivator to "dress" and "keep" the Garden of Eden? Obviously God thought of the lowly serpent *first*. (Hardly the most flattering thought, right?)

Interestingly enough, the modern philosopher Mortimer Adler tells us it was necessary for God to create angels in order to make the world a better place in which to live. Are we to assume then that God created the celestial beings called angels (in secret, perhaps?) *after* He found out that His favorite creature Adam didn't live up to His expectations? Or . . . did the omniscient Jewish God create the angels *before* He created man because He knew ahead of time His creature would turn out to be something less than perfect?

And what are we to think of the oh-so-perfect angel which, according to Adler, was divinely subsidized to improve our earthly spaceship? Was it not Satan—according to theological and philosophical angelologists—the seraph of seraphs, the archangel of archangels "girt with golden wings," who was cast out of heaven for disobedience and pride and who became the number-one "fallen angel" and the great adversary of man—the Devil, or Prince of Darkness? With angelic friends like that, who needs enemies? (Occasionally I suspect that philosophers like Adler believe God is made in the image of philosophers like Adler.)

On the theological side of the fence, an explanation for the creation of angels can be found in one of the more peculiar Christian interpretations of this quandary.

It seems that some *perfect* supreme being known as God tries like hell to create angels as *perfect* spiritual beings. He botches the job, apparently, because some of the angels turn sour, and refuse to do good—which is not quite the way the heavenly cookie was supposed to crumble. (Why should angels have to work at being perfect, I wonder?) So God gives up on perfection and starts all over again. This time, He gives imperfect *man*kind dominion over the physical creation. He also provides His imperfect creature with a way out. Sinful man can never develop a godly CHARACTER by himself, of course; but, with his generous creator's help, he can. He just

has to be an obedient and willing servant and never disobey God and then he can become a *son* of God. The few who *prove* themselves *worthy* will be saved. The rest will be doomed. "I have set before you life and death," says the Jewish God. "CHOOSE! And you'd better choose RIGHT!" And thus it is that we are left with something that can be conveniently called "evolutionary creationism." (The barrel of mumbo-jumbo relied upon by Christians as they attempt to haul their theological chestnuts out of the fires of perplexity appears to be bottomless.)

But back to Adam and Eve, who—as you will recall—have just been booted out of heaven on earth, the Garden of Eden. As if that wasn't enough, they found themselves afflicted with guilt and shame because of their nakedness.

"And the eyes of both of them were opened, and *they knew that they were naked*" (it took a snake in the grass to make them see the light); "and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons." (It was at that critical moment in our checkered history that necessity gave birth to invention.)

But all of their trials and tribulations didn't seem to slow them down.

Even though they had just been cast out of the heavenly garden and even though they were naked and ashamed, it didn't take Adam and Eve long to start making a little whoopee. In no time at all they had an accident.

It was a boy.

While they were raising Cain, Abel happened (very *apropos,* you might say); and before you know it Cain just flares up and does his brother unto death.

It happened this way:

They were out in the field one day (tilling it and keeping it, I suppose), when all of a sudden Cain "rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him." (I don't know why; to keep the plot moving, I guess.)

Conjecture has it that twin sisters came with Abel but nobody seems to know (or care) what happened to them. Not that it matters. They were only girls.

CHAPTER THREE

Twice as Wicked

I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

(Genesis 3:16.)

And on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy . . .

(Acts 2:18.)

To digress for a moment, you might be interested to know that the Women's Liberation Movement isn't a phenomenon of recent birth. (Peculiar thinking isn't indigenous to the 20th century, you know.)

Long before our era, according to Havelock Ellis, one of those intellectual types who labor assiduously to determine that theological word-weaving isn't allowed to pollute scholarly objectivity, woman's position was fairly high in Babylon and Egypt—but *far from enviable in Israel.*

With the biblical Fall of Man, Woman became the receptacle of the most evil principle of all. Man was innocent and godlike until Woman corrupted him. Thus began a relentless down-the-centuries degradation of women under both Judaism and Christianity.

Among the Hebrews a married woman was one who had become the property of an owner. The husband was the *baal,* or the possessor; the wife was the *beulah,* or the one possessed. The father had total power over his family. He could sell his children, give them away or kill them. Should he find some "uncleanness" in his wife (horror of horrors) he could cast her from his house. (Males, be it duly noted, are incapable of being polluted with "uncleanness.")

Because she had been created with a sexual nature that required the issuing of blood from the vagina (God's curse imposed on women in punishment for Eve's part in the seduction of Adam as the Christian Establishment formally asserted at a later date) woman was *taboo* as far as holy things were concerned. The victim unfortunate enough to come in contact with an "unclean" woman had to be freed from those polluting consequences by a blood sacrifice. For obvious reasons, therefore, all sexual activity during menstruation or any other discharge of blood from the vagina was strictly forbidden.

"And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness, and shall uncover her nakedness"; stated one of the laws of the day, "he hath made naked her fountain, and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood; and both of them shall be cut off from among their people."

Here is another one: "And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even." (You don't fool around with laws like that.)

There was even another law that implied that it was twice as wicked for a woman to bear a daughter as a son. Should a woman give birth to a male child she would be unclean for seven days; should she bear a maid child she would be unclean for two weeks. (So women shouldn't think that *they* are such hot stuff either.)

Until the female became ritually purified from her "uncleanness," it was decreed that everything that she would lie or sit upon would be unclean and whoever touched her bed or whatever she sat upon would also be unclean. It comes as no surprise to learn that the Hebrews had a morning prayer for husband and son in which they each thanked God "that he was not made a woman."

By the time of Jesus, explains Franz Delitzsch, a 19th century expert in late-Jewish and Talmudic literature, Israel "regarded with suspicion and contempt every trade which necessitated an intercourse with women."

To better understand the harsh condemnation of women and the origins of the Christian-Judaic morality we must glance briefly at the great religions of the Near East. The theologies of Babylonia, Egypt, Greece and Rome, to name but a few, were based on the maternal deity. The composite figure was the Great Mother, who bestowed fertility and mothered all the other gods. The divine mother of the Babylonians was Ishtar; of the Egyptians, Isis; of the Phrygians, Cybele; of the Greeks, Aphrodite; and of the Romans, Venus.

The Hebrews, on the other hand, were father-worshipers who fiercely opposed the mother religions. When they appeared first in history the Jews were worshipers of more than one god. It has been suggested that the moon may have been one of their supreme deities, as well as a personification of a mother-goddess for *all* the Semitic migrants who wandered from Arabia into the fertile lands of Mesopotamia and Syria. The name of the moon goddess in ancient Babylonia was Sinne; she corresponds to the great goddess Manat in Arabia and to Venus and Aphrodite in other countries. The moon was the emblem of Israel in Talmudic literature and in Hebrew tradition. The mythical ancestors of the Hebrews lived in Ur and Harran, the centers of the Semitic moon-cult.

But by the time of Moses the concept of monotheism was being developed and the mother-goddess of the Jews—if there had ever been one—had long since been radically excised from the official Hebrew religion. S. W. Baron, in his monumental work *Social and Religious History of the Jews,* indicates the "lack of a female deity, a Baalah, the 'Great Mother'." And psychoanalyst Theodore Reik describes the phenomenon in this manner: "Even the root of the goddess-idea was torn out: there is no feminine form of Adon, the name of the Lord."

If the Hebrews ever tried to develop a mother-goddess the idea was probably defeated by the fanatically formalistic prophets. The Jews entered the threshold of the modern world, therefore, without a divine Mother; and an essentially Motherless Christianity developed from patriarchal Judaism. Taking over the holy books of a people who did not have a Mother, the Christians developed a patriarchy nearly as rigid and tyrannical as that of the Jews.

The adherents of the new religion soon developed an obsessional horror of sex—a desperate fear that found much of its motivation in the belief that man had been created a pure being in the image of God and that he had been defiled by woman. And they turned against woman with a hatred so bitter and intense no language could be found strong enough to express their horror.

The early leaders of the Christian Church—to whom the female was clearly an instrument of the devil—set the pace for the condemnation of women.

Saint John Chrysostom described women as a "necessary evil, a natural temptation, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination, and a painted ill." Women should keep silence and obedience, maintained Saint Paul; and he taught that it was a shame for them to speak in church.

Best expressing the view of the early Church, Tertullian wrote: "God's verdict on the sex still holds good, and the sex's guilt must still hold also. You are the devil's gateway!" Woman should go about "clad in mourning and ashes, her eyes overflowing with the tears of remorse," he added, "to make us forget that you have been man's destruction."

Clement was so disgusted at the thought of anything feminine he felt that every woman ought to be filled with shame at the mere thought that she was a woman. To Cyprian, woman was the instrument which Satan employed to possess men's souls. Woman was even blamed for the death of the Christian savior-god. "For your deceit," raged Tertullian, "the very son of God had to perish!"

To destroy the flesh on which Eve had put the curse Christians began to maim and torture the body in every way imaginable. Convinced that practically all the ills of the earth had been caused by women, hysterical monks fled into the wilderness to wrestle with Satan, to endure the most hideous forms of torture and self-mutilation, and to try to erase their terrible fear of the *Bitch of Eden*. "These unhappy hypochondriacs," as the noted historian Jules Michelet called them, roamed the desert "full of self-loathing and self-horror."

They buried themselves to the neck in the burning desert sands. They let blood-sucking insects eat at their eyelids and crawl into the openings of their bodies. They withdrew into tiny stone hovels never again to emerge and there they lived in their own filth until they died. The more dedicated the ascetic the more vigorously he abused himself. The greatest monk was the one who could fast the longest, sleep the least, endure the most or invent the most extreme forms of bodily punishment.

One of the more famous ascetics of the time was Saint Simeon Stylites. A rope encircling his body had become imbedded in his flesh which putrefied around it. His biographer writes that Simeon ordered him to pick up worms that fell from his body and to replace them in the sores. In Syria, Simeon was worshiped by multitudes. "When he walks vermin drip from

his body," commented an admiring disciple.

By the time of the Middle Ages the principle of magical contamination had crept into the condemnation of women. Not merely the sexual act but the mere *presence* of a woman was liable to attract evil, so that during a plague it was inadvisable to sleep with a woman or even go near her bed. A good woman, the wise and virtuous were wont to observe during those perilous times, "was but like one eel put in a bag amongst 500 snakes, and if a man should have the luck to grope out that one eel from all the snakes, yea he had at best but a wet eel by the tail."

And why not?

Had not woman been made from a crooked rib? . . . a rib distorted and turned against man? Indeed, no other than the great Solomon saw fit to lament one of the more pernicious aspects of womanhood: "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion . . . Her mouth is smoother than oil: but her latter end is bitter than wormwood." (And who among you would dare to contradict wise old King Solomon, I wonder?)

CHAPTER FOUR

Wily Old Noah

Of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark.

(Genesis 6:19.)

Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female.

(Genesis 7:2.)

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the Lord got all steamed up because of the untimely demise of Abel, so Cain takes off, picks up a broad somewhere (where, I don't know), and they begin to beget.

Affairs occur right and left after that and before you know it almost everybody is begetting somebody. Seth begat Enos; Enos begat Cainen; Arphaxad begat Salah (who miraculously becomes the son of Cainen later in the Gospel of Luke); Cainen begat Mahalaleel . . .

This could go on.

It did for quite some time as a matter of fact, and everybody lived to be eight or nine hundred years old working like beavers to beget a great big population for the Jewish God to come along and destroy with His flood.

Which brings us to Noah, who was begot by Lamech, who was begot by somebody (I forget who). Noah was a good old boy. He had a pipeline right to God; and one day he suddenly went into the ark construction business.

It appears that man was just not a soil tiller at heart. He was wicked or obsessed with begetting or something or other ("And God saw the wickedness of man was great on the earth . . ." etc., etc.); so it repented the Lord that He had ever conjured up heaven and earth and all that. In fact, "it grieved him at his heart" to such a degree He decided to take steps. (This strikes me as being rather odd. Noah's world must have been a veritable berrypatch compared with the way it is now. On second thought, maybe the Lord isn't prophetic.)

But to Noah and his ark; you have all heard this one, I know. The Lord piled two (according to one version of the story) of every kind of animal on the ark along with old Noah and his relatives. (It pays to have clout, right?) Then He pulled the chain and gave the world a solid month and a third of good sound flushing resulting in the covering of the earth with water to a depth of five miles and a half (which must have wreaked havoc with

Noah's rheumatism; after six hundred years you're no spring chicken, you know).

From whence you might be inclined to inquire did all that water come? Certain scholarly divines of the 20th century tell us that a canopy of water originally surrounded the earth's upper atmosphere prior to the 40-day deluge. This they suggest possibly explains what was meant by the "windows of heaven were opened."

They tell us too that this water canopy may have been responsible for the long lifespans of 700, 800 and 900 years of that day and time since it could have severely restricted the entry of ultraviolet radiation into the lower atmosphere and helped generate a healthy and prolific breed of humans. Adam, you may recall, lived to be 930 years of age. And don't forget Abraham. You should know that much of the Old Testament is devoted to the history of one man's family—the family of Abraham. He was over a hundred years old when he begat Zimram, Jockshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah; and he was probably just getting started.

Because of those long-lived and prolific begetters, one zealous divine tells us that by the time of the flood the earth's population would have numbered an eye-popping 37 *billion*. Malthusian law students could very well argue that it would have been impossible for the pre-flood population to hit such a peak because food production techniques were too primitive to feed so many. (But what do they know?)

Back on terra firma wily old Noah burned some clean beasts on God's altar (perhaps he did take more than two of every kind of animal with him; otherwise he wouldn't have had any extras to be used for the purposes of oblation), a procedure known in those ducky days as a *sacrifice*. (What the Jewish God was supposed to get out of a couple of burnt crisps, I'll never know. It's a funny world.) Whereupon God repented, admitting He had been off the beam all along, that men were just kids at heart and that He wouldn't pull that flood business on them again. "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake," saith the Lord whose name is *Penitent,* "for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any living thing." (Shows His heart was in the right place, doesn't it?)

He settled for famines and plagues after that.

Except for a considerable amount of riotous carousing Noah doesn't really amount to very much from that point on. Among other things, he "began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken," with more than passing regularity; "and he was uncovered within his tent," of all things. And then there was Ham, the father of Canaan, who saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brethren without—and Noah said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren."

Somewhat later, certain members of the Christian Establishment saw fit to attribute the subsequent destruction of the Canaanites and the horrors of the African slave trade to the divine effects of that holy curse. (The Christian crystal ball works in both directions, it seems: by foretelling the future and embellishing the past.)

And that's about all there is to the Noah story, except for maybe two or

three hundred more years of imbibing the fragrant grape and carousing; after which he died. (About time, too.)

Incidentally, Saint Augustine once observed that the drunkenness of Noah prefigured the suffering and death of Christ. (Augustine must have been no stranger to the fermented grape himself when he came up with that one.)

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

I just wanted to explain how it all *began*—heaven and earth and all that, I mean.

CHAPTER FIVE

Seers and Prophets

God is not a man, that he should lie.

(Numbers 23:19.)

Now, therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee.

(I Kings 22:23.)

As anyone who has all his marbles knows full well, of course, the whole story has been chronicled in that popular best seller THE BIBLE—a prodigious, "prophetic" and trying volume containing some sixteen hundred pages of bad habits. Naturally, it's called THE GOOD BOOK.

In case you didn't know the Bible is purported to have been written by seers and prophets. There are some among us, however, who seriously question the ability of those fabled storytellers of old to "seer" past their axes and asses; but that's neither here nor there.

Speaking for myself though, I must admit that when I was young and in my prime I used to muse upon how said seers and prophets had come to realize in such intimate detail the stupendous accounts of which they scribbled so freely. Jonah's sojourn in the whale, for instance; that one really piqued my curiosity. And Daniel's adventures in the lion's den, a super-duper thriller, indeed. Also "Samson and Delilah"! Now there's a tale that really stirs up a lad's mischievous molecules.

You will find the story of Samson in the Book of Judges—the *seventh* book of the Bible—along with some mildly interesting anecdotes highlighting the escapades of Abimelech, Jephthah the Gileadite, Benjamin and a crummy sort (expletive deleted) who divided his favorite concubine into some twelve distinct portions and shipped them to as many different parts of Israel just to prove how he felt. I never did find out why. (He was a Levite. Perhaps that explains it.)

Abimelech won his medal of honor for smiting Shechemites—a breed overlooked by Joshua, I suppose. (I'll get to Josh later.) Benjamin set out to wipe up the Israelites—until the Lord stepped in; then Benjy thought better of the project. And Jephthah the Gileadite, the son of a harlot, rubbed out a casual forty-two thousand Ephraimites for calling "shibboleth" something else.

Jephthah, you may be interested to learn, is the one who put his foot into

it in no uncertain terms when he vowed a vow unto the Lord that he would pay off a debt to the Lord by offering up as a burnt offering whosoever would come forth from the doors of his house to greet him.

And who came forth from the doors of his house to greet him with timbrels and with dances?

No one other than his only child—his daughter.

Nonetheless, being a forthright man, a man of his word, the honorable Jephthah did with her according to his vow which he had vowed. Not that she was really burned into a crisp, certain Christian apologists, horrified at the thought that anyone would jump to that conclusion, later insisted. She was merely condemned to perpetual virginity. (A pious snatching at straws at best, don't you think?)

Samson and you-know-who you know about; but I'll tell you anyway.

It all began when the Israelites went a-whoring after some other God or two once too often—which prompted the Jewish God to decide that He had had just about enough of that fickle-minded nonsense; so He sicced the Philistines on them to show them what was what. (Philistines: a surly bunch of uncircumcised brutes who just loved showing Israelites what was what.)

Well, the law of diminishing returns is applicable, even unto the Israelites; and when the prospect of having nothing left out of that endeavor but Philistines (a sheerly calamitous consequence, we are led to believe) reared its ugly head, the Lord was sore-pressed to haul His favorite chestnuts out of the coals. So He sent an angel to inspire the barren spouse of a guy named Manoah to conceive—she wasn't able to bear children until the angel whispered in her ear—what was destined to become the Israelites' Messiah of the day, so to speak: Samson, by name. (A roundabout way of doing it, I must say.)

Samson, as it came to pass, grew up to be a good-natured oaf with a zest for living and an elastic capacity for slaughtering Philistines. (Born to his task, you might say.) He wasn't afraid of anything but death and taxes. He killed lions, too.

In due time, unable to let well enough alone, Samson acquired for himself a mate of sorts—a *Philistine* one at that. (Lost his head there.) It seems that he was never able to keep a secret and naturally she peddled them to you can guess who. This practice sort of kindled Samson's anger, so he up and kindled all the Phillies' cornfields—which burned up more than the corn, of course; so a task force of two or three thousand stout fellows of good Philistine stock was dispatched to dispatch Sammy boy. They centered him in at Lehi.

Now dig this:

Lo and behold there appeared at Samson's feet the jawbone of an ass; whereupon he swooped it up and before you could say *Leviticus,* whaled the bejesus out of a thousand or so of the Phillies—which promptly convinced them that in all the trade of war no feat is nobler than a brave retreat.

It came to pass next that a tomato named Delilah was hired by the Phillies to wiggle her way into Samson's affections and find out just what it was that made their pet anathema tick. Delilah, a vampish type who hailed from Sorek, is reported to have been just about the hottest lass who ever decorated

a goatskin. (There must be something to this; people still bandy the name about.)

As usual Samson found it trying to keep his mouth shut for some reason, and after Delilah had set the Phillies on his neck *three* times (you'd think he'd have caught on), he gave her the straight poop about his great strength being the result of his long hair and the greasy kid stuff he used on it. (Kid stuff: a magical strongman formula made from goat grease. "Kid" stuff. Get it? Oh well . . .)

All Delilah had to do then was give him a crew cut and that was that. After which the Phillies tied a millstone to his neck and did him dirt generally.

The last we hear of poor old Sam he was called in to do some command sporting for the Phillies. Well, he brought down the house; and whether it was his performance or the masonry he certainly made hash out of his audience. Thereafter, one doesn't hear much about the Philistines. (They probably retired to the hills to swell their ranks.)

Whatever happened to Delilah is a moot question. Lost in the shuffle, no doubt.

The entire, unfortunate situation is well summed up in Judges' final words: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes." (This explains a lot.)

CHAPTER SIX

Inherently Evil

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

(I John 3:9.)

If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

(I John 1:8.)

But back to when I was young and in my prime . . .

Because of a peculiar propensity to question establishmentarian dictums, I was given to reading the more lurid Bible stories and then going right out in front of God and everybody and making remarks like, "The only jawbone in the Samson story wagged in the ass who made it up," and "Jonah won the Hebrew liars' contest with a whale of a story," and the like; and people were wont to stare at me oddly—as if I were rather more backward than forward in the cognitive department.

As if that wasn't enough, I persisted in being absolutist about the Mosaic account of the story of creation and the Fall of Man—a curious account at best, should it be followed straight out to the extreme limit of its logical consequences.

What do we have if we do (follow it out, I mean)?

A God who creates today a world the construction of which He repents tomorrow. He populates it with living things including man (yes, yes, I know Eve was there, too). An all good, all knowing, and all powerful God creates a less than all good and wise creature; then God arranges it so His creature will have a *choice*—the choice being provided for the purpose of placing the creature in a situation where he will be able to prove that he possesses *merit* by demonstrating the ability to avoid the *wrong* choice.

To provide man with a choice is to play upon the inherent weaknesses that have been built into him. To provide man with a choice is to tempt him.

So what did God's creature do?

He succumbed to the temptation, of course. And how could God in His infinite wisdom believe that His creation would do otherwise? If man had been created wholly good, he would never have been able to commit evil,

regardless of the temptation; and in that case, the work would have been worthy of an all good, all wise God.

As a result of Adam's fall, therefore, a God made very "wroth" because His creature didn't live up to His expectations, DAMNS from that moment on—at His own good pleasure—the creature that He Himself had created. (Now I ask you, would you buy a used car from someone like that?)

"And why not?" there are those among you who may well ask. "Why shouldn't man be damned?"

After all, as the Christian Establishment takes every opportunity to remind us, man is *by nature,* EVIL—a biblical theme that runs the gamut from Genesis to Revelation.

If we are "by nature" evil, we are *inherently* evil, as I see it, with the evil built into us and ineradicable.

"Not so," declares that popular spokesman for the Christian Establishment, Billy Graham. "Man is evil by nature, but not *totally* depraved." (Bless the provision of small miracles.) It's just that there is something seriously wrong with us *at heart* since we find it so difficult to keep the commands the Jewish God has given us. All we need is God's forgiving grace and our intrinsic evil will magically disappear. (I've got it! Man who is *naturally* evil has the capacity for being *unnaturally* good—a situation that would appear to be at best a blessing both mixed and questionable. Well . . . nobody's perfect.)

To digress for another moment, why should our *wrongness* be seated in our hearts, I wonder? On the other hand, why should all of our *goodness* be seated in our hearts? I'm reminded of the Very Rev. Msgr. Herman L. Heide who provided us with this observation some years back: "The whole world of human relationship should be one of heart much more than it should be one of head . . . Only out of the heart comes loyalty, warmth, devotion, sympathy, patience, kindness, love."

That's all very well, I guess; but at the risk of being consigned to the ranks of the lunatic fringe, I must confess that I have never been much of a "heart" man. For some foggy reason the heart has never seemed to me to be much more than a rather obstinate cone-shaped chunk of muscle. I can say with thorough conviction though, that I am a "liver" man. I have always been rather warmly attached to that velvety, reddish-brown gland that works so nobly in its conversion of glucose into glycogen for storage and reconversion into glucose when the need arises.

There are lots and lots of "heart" people; but there aren't many "liver" people. Open any book of quotations to the "H's" and look for HEART. You will find scads of pious encomiums dedicated to that "instrument whose strings steal nobler music from Life's many frets." Open a thousand books of verse and I'll bet you won't find a single ode to the liver. When it comes to internal organ fetishism, the *heart* sweeps the field. It's a pity.

If only the world had produced more "liver" people, we could probably turn to the Old Testament now—Proverbs, for example—and read: "He that is of a merry liver hath a continual feast."

The wily Bard of Avon probably would have ennobled the liver in language destined to resound and reverberate down the ages: "Now cracks a noble liver; Good-night, sweet prince."

The Liver is a Lonely Hunter could well be a 20th century literary classic. And the lover's liver would have been enshrined in song and verse throughout the ages. Sir Philip Sidney would, in all likelihood, have penned: "My true-love hath my liver, and I have his,/ By just exchange, one for the other given."

In the final analysis, then, I must to mine own self be true, and declare—in a paraphrase of Billy Grahamese—that there must be something seriously wrong with us *at liver,* since we find it so difficult to keep the commands God has given us. Out of my liver comes loyalty, warmth, devotion, sympathy, patience, kindness, love. My heart may thump when I see a pretty girl but my liver fairly glows. And when it comes to a presidential candidate, if he's right, in my liver I know he's right.

At all events, my early wondering about the whys and the wherefores of all these things eventually led me to explore the ups and the downs and the byways and the throughways of the historical wastelands of the Bible (along with certain of its assorted spinoffs): THE GREATEST BOOK EVER WRITTEN—according to the public relations flacks of the Christian Establishment; and I should like forthwith to present a somewhat rambling and not too brief rundown of same, along with various and sundry expository digressions. For the which supply, admit me chronicler to this, a historical sketch (of sorts).

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Books

I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.
(Isaiah 45:7.)

Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.
(Romans 15:33.)

THE BIBLE has slugged its way through multitudinous centuries of thick tongues—which accounts for the way it is now.

As very astutely observed by Oscar Wilde, it "begins with a man and a woman in a garden and ends with Revelations."

A great deal more has been said about the Bible. Indeed, perhaps too much has been said: "A history of wickedness . . ."; "The content of the Bible is man . . ."; "A book of riddles . . ."; "Old wives' tales," by Saint Augustine; "In the Scriptures, there is naught but absolute truth," *also* by Saint Augustine; "The history of every man should be a Bible . . ."; "The Scripture is like an old fiddle, upon which any tune can be played . . ."; among other things.

And just for the sake of variety, let's not forget the ancient proverb that goes something like this: "A Bible and a stone go well together. If one misses, the other hits."

On the other hand, perhaps not enough has been said—enough in the right vein, that is. I'm reminded of the elderly black minister's prompt reply when asked if the Hebrew children were boys or girls: "They was boys, of course. If they'd of been girls, they'd of been *She*brew children. People reads, but with no unduhstandin'." (This is what's called "getting to the heart of the matter.")

The English word "Bible" is a derivative (or anglicized form) of the Greek expression *biblia* which is itself a diminutive plural of the Greek term *biblos* or *biblion*—meaning "books." The name was originally coined by Saint John Chrysostom—alias "The Golden-Mouthed"—about whom it could not be said that he was noted for uncommunicativeness. Certain periods of recorded history are nearly as full of what he had to say as he was.

The Bible is a collection of sixty-six books (twenty-seven in the New Testament and thirty-nine in the Old).

The Bible is often referred to by the expressions "Holy Scriptures," or "Holy Writ," which merely mean "Holy Writings." The biblical revelation

is supposed to be a written revelation—although many of its words were originally spoken orally.

The original languages of the Old Testament are thought to be Akkadian, proto-Aramean (Amorite), and possibly Canaanite, with a select number of Egyptian loan-words thrown in for good measure. Hellenistic Greek (or Koine) is said to be the original New Testament language.

Turning to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* we find this rather pertinent remark regarding the credentials of "The Good Book":

> Miracle, prophecy, and the power of inspiring a faith that triumphs over death are the main proofs of the divine origins of the Scriptures.

Supernatural claims to the contrary notwithstanding, there are those who are enamored of the opinion that anything capable of surviving the machinations of the Holy Roman Empire well deserves to be accredited with being "divinely inspired." Not that it necessarily follows; but it is a thought.

At this point, you might be interested to know that the Gnostics, an early A.D. sect of progressives, *also* held that the Old Testament was "inspired"—but, by an EVIL spirit; which is a mackerel with a different sort of a stench. (Simple, forceful Christians, however, merely held that "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and that was that.)

Any suggestion to the effect that the Christians were hardly bullish on Gnosticism would stretch understatement to the breaking point. After all, not only did the Gnostics treat Jesus Christ as the product of a mythical union between a heavenly ghost and an earthly virgin, and the Old Testament Jewish God as cruel and brutal, they used to sit around giggling over the Mosaic account of the creation and Fall of Man; which made the Christians madder than bees without a queen, of course, and provoked them into storming about hurling epithets—*firstborn of Satan, seducers of women, savage beasts, scorpions, ravening wolves, demoniacs* and *atheists*—at the Gnostics. Why, even kindly old Dean Inge (the late dean of Saint Paul's Cathedral) of jolly old England was once roused enough to declare that Gnosticism contained all the features of "degenerate mysticism."

What was Gnosticism?

"It drew into itself elements from many sources, Babylonian, Persian, Phrygian, Syrian, Egyptian, Greek. It had affinities with the Babylonian dualism of an upper and a lower world, with the Persian dualism of light and darkness, with the Greek dualism of matter and spirit," says J. E. Carpenter. (Now you know.)

Just for the record, Gnostic negativism may have been motivated to one degree or another by the biblical statements in Deuteronomy, Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekial, Joshua, Judges and Kings, which tell of a Jewish God who is an angry God every day, a consuming fire of a God who makes peace and creates evil, who gives His people statutes that are not good, and judgements whereby they should not live, who casts down great stones from heaven upon His people, who sends evil spirits, and who puts lying spirits into the mouths of His prophets. Several centuries later, the sainted and similarly motivated Aquinas was robustly positive regarding the "consuming fire" of his "angry" god. "By the command of God," wrote this leading authority

in all things Catholic, "it is lawful to murder the innocent, to rob and to commit all lewdness, because He is the Lord of life and death, and all things . . ."

Incidentally, the Gnostics didn't last.

It might be worth noting at this juncture that Gnosticism wasn't alone when it came to mounting a challenge to Christianity. Not only were there numerous pagan sects, there was also a raging conflict among the many sects within the Christian cult itself—almost 100 by Augustine's day; so many, indeed, that we can touch upon but a few of them.

A caution, however, is requisite.

The historical researcher cannot fairly judge the past in the light of the standards and the values of the society in which he lives. An example of the difficulty the scholar faces in trying to think himself back into a world which is not his own can be demonstrated by the manner in which some historians describe the sacred temple women who lived in the ancient times we are examining here.

Some scholars tell us there was "great sexual license" within the temples of the Semitic deities, and that the temples were sanctuaries "thronged with sacred prostitutes." Other historical investigators report that the Canaanite temples were little more than "gigantic brothels" which served to introduce "prostitution" into Israel. The temple women may have been sacred nuns and the purpose of their existence may have been to secure fertility to those men and women who were barren; but the historian who dismisses their sanctuaries as "mere brothels" appears to be guilty of applying to the people of the past *our* meanings and judging them by *our* standards. (Not that this headwork doesn't evoke some captivating images. Imagine worshiping at the brothel of your choice.)

By the same token, it would be absurd for us to think that our world today is merely a whit more liberalized and enlightened extension of those palmy days in Palestine 2000 years ago when what we are expected to believe was one of the higher points of metaphysical and mystical contemplation supposedly provided us with the *one true God* and an *unquestionable body of theological truth*.

Few of us could even begin to comprehend the degree to which magic penetrated the whole substance of the lives of the people of that day and time. According to some researchers, magic had been popular among the Hebrews as far back as the time of Saul; and biblical allusions to magic indicate a widespread acquaintance with its manifold forms at an early time.

All diseases were manifestations of the wrath of God for transgressions or due to the attack of demons or to the breach of a taboo or to the Evil Eye. The whole world was filled with demons; every phase and every form of life was ruled by them; and they had to be cajoled, appeased, bribed and rewarded. It was an age of fancy, ritual, mysticism, superstitious awe and unsound science. There was no privacy for the earth-bound mortal because angels and demons were forever watching. Even the simplest tasks such as bathing or clipping of finger nails could not be undertaken without first awaiting the proper moment.

It was an age in which there was an intense craving everywhere for a life after death; in which all major events were believed to cast a foretelling

shadow through prophecies, signs and prodigies of nature; in which there was a frenzied hunger for wonders, marvels and miracles. And most indicative of the confusion of the age, perhaps, was the fact that religious institutions with the prestige of centuries behind them were crumbling and new forms were beginning to take shape. It was an age steeped in Oriental mythology in which a cataclysmic change was at hand and the crash and doom of the world was just around every corner.

Everywhere the cry for salvation was loud, persistent and universal as human beings sought deliverance from the burdens of grief, sorrow, sickness and death, from the universal power of demons, from the tyranny of fate, the caprice of *Sors,* or *Fortuna,* from the consciousness of guilt and the tedium of life.

Let us imagine a modern Europe, surmises the erudite biblical scholar Cumont, in which "the faithful had deserted the Christian churches to worship Allah or Brahma, to follow the precepts of Confucius or Buddha, or to adopt the maxims of the Shinto . . ." He suggests further that we should imagine "a great confusion of all the races of the world in which Arabian mullahs, Chinese scholars, Japanese bonzes, Tibetan lamas and Hindu pundits should all be preaching fatalism and pre-destination, ancestor-worship and devotion to a deified sovereign, pessimism and deliverance through annihilation . . ." With this stoking of the mental furnace, he is inferring, we might be able to understand better the religious confusion and the social chaos of the ancient world.

Thrust out of the churning bowels of this chaotic and confused age, the young Christian faith speedily divided into 80 or 90 sects. During the earliest centuries of the new religious experiment, there was no central authority and consequently no uniformity of practice. The result: a never-ending life-and-death struggle just to determine what orthodoxy was supposed to be; and the competition between the sects was ferocious. They fought with each other with an intensity that prompted the ridicule of the pagans. The Emperor Julian, for instance, viewed their violent disputations with a wonder that prompted him to compare Christians divided by creed or opinion to savage beasts.

Manichaeism, one of the early sects, had its brightest day in the sun in the 4th century. None other than the great Augustine considered it worthwhile to be numbered for a time among the adherents of that particular heretical creed. Manichaeism may have been an offshoot of Zoroastrianism, or an outgrowth of Christianity, or a product of late Judaism, or it may have been based upon the Mandaeans, or it may have been the prevailing element in Buddhism. You can take your pick. (Certainty never emerged as a high point in the scholarly investigations of this cult.)

Manes, or *Mani,* was supposed to be a religious innovator who endeavored to make a synthesis of elements from various existing religions (Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, *et al.*) to form a new religion that would be universally adopted and would have no national borders—or something to that effect. Whatever it was supposed to be, the Christians seemed to fear and loathe it with a passion and they spent several active centuries trying to destroy the followers of Manes. It wasn't until the Middle Ages that they finished the job.

The early Christians weren't too thrilled with *Montanism,* either. The Montanists, you see, believed the church was growing too rapidly and losing its "purity and the fine, heroic enthusiasm of simpler times." (Reactionaries, one and all.) Not only that, Montanism, Novatianism and Donatism were all alike in that they questioned the belief that salvation depended on adherence with the Catholic Church. (You can imagine how well that sat with the Christian Establishment.)

The Montanists didn't last, either. Eventually, they were simply dismissed in revisionist circles as just another one of those outbreaks of mysticism "which from time to time have visisted the church, giving it new life yet threatening it with destruction."

Arius (need I say that he was the founder of *Arianism*?), on the other hand, was supposed to be a grave and blameless fellow, gentle of speech and persuasive of argument, who led a struggle to free Christianity of the obscurities of the popular theology and banish mystery from religion with an appeal to logic. Although he didn't seem to get very far, there are those who suggest that there soon ceased to be any professed Arians, "perhaps because all Christians are Arians at heart," according to one scholarly observer. Should that be so, it's a classic case of joining them instead of licking them.

Donatus was the leader of another prominent heresy known as *Donatism*. As mentioned above, his cult was in considerable disfavor with the established church. Donatus has been described as being intelligent, well educated, of ascetic morality and not exactly an ordinary fellow. His followers are supposed to have treated him as "a being of a higher order than themselves." But that didn't seem to help. He died in exile and his followers were massacred. (Another plus for the Christians.)

Even the sect of *Docetism* was a powerful force for centuries. The advocates of Docetism believed that in the person of Jesus the human element was only an appearance.

And then there was *Mithraism*—a pagan religion from which Christianity borrowed a great deal.

In order to underplay the similarities between Christianity and paganism, the Christian Establishment likes to emphasize that the church's greatest competition in the battle for men's allegiance in those early days came not from the mystery religions, but instead from the philosophers and their disciples—Seneca and his fellow Stoics, Plato, Socrates, Epicurus, Cato, Laelius and Zeno. But the finest scholars in this field—Cumont, Dieterich, and many others—take the opposite view. The most serious rival to Christianity, they claim—even more dangerous than Stoicism or Epicurianism—was Mithraism. By the 3rd century, the dualistic religion of the sun-god Mithra challenged the advance of the church in almost every province of the Empire. Indeed, so nearly related and so closely allied were these two cults, Christianity narrowly escaped being called Mithraism.

Because of the pervasive influence of Mithraism, the Christian leaders attacked the Persian cult with special venom. The only way they could account for the similarity of rituals—the sacramental meal of bread and water (or wine), the use of baptism, the sealing of initiates, the promise of resurrection—was by claiming that the devil had inspired a deliberate par-

ody of divine ordinances. They felt that the Mithraists had "blasphemously imitated the Christian rites and doctrines." In particular, Augustine and Clement fed the flames of this fantasy. The chief doctrines of the pagans had all been borrowed from the Christian books, they said.

Of additional similarities, both religions had virgins and ascetics, both observed the *Sun*-day—the day of the sun, and Mithra (the name means *friend*) was said to have been born in a cave. (The early Christian fathers such as Justin and Origen believed that Jesus had been born in a cave; and it probably wasn't the result of coincidence that the earliest Christians were called "friends.")

"Of all the Oriental cults none was so severe as Mithraism," says Cumont, "none attained an equal moral elevation, none could have had so strong a hold on mind and heart."

Nearly all the dissident sects were eventually exterminated by the Roman Church, sometimes (as in the case of the Albigensians at a much later date) with the most cold-blooded massacre.

But back to "The Good Book."

Regardless of the many biblical detractors and skeptics, it's worth noting that the Bible is the most-quoted publication of all time. Give or take a hundred million or so, around two *billion* Bibles have been sold since Gutenberg prepared the first printed one. And the Book of Mark in the New Testament is said to be the most widely translated book in the world.

The Bible has been published in at least 180 languages and dialects, with parts of it having appeared in 1,280 languages. And the following information—of inestimable worth—comes to us from an eccentric Bible scholar named Thomas H. Horne who lived in Britain in the 19th century. He spent seventeen years counting every letter and word in the Bible. The results of his inquiry: The Bible contains 3,566,480 letters and 773,693 words. (If you don't believe Sir Thomas, *you* count them.)

How about the age of the universe? Or the age of the earth? In case you haven't heard, our planet's birthday has been pinpointed down to the very hour of the day. We are forever indebted to the scholarly research of a pair of nearly forgotten British bibliotaries for this information.

James Ussher, born in 1581, grew up to be Anglican Archbishop of Armagh in Ireland and a regular whiz at figuring the ages of Old Testament characters. After years of careful calculation involving the adding up of everyone's age, he deduced in 1650 the exact year of the creation. Dr. John Lightfoot, vice chancellor of prestigious St. Catherine's College in Cambridge, calculated a few years later the hour and day of that momentous event.

At precisely 9 a.m., London time, October 23, 4004 B.C., the spirit of the Jewish God moved upon the face of the waters, saying, "Let there be light." Think what you will; but I'm inclined to believe that such no-nonsense fellows as Ussher and Lightfoot are not to be lightly dismissed.

And from our trivia files we have these notes: The word "Lord" appears 1,855 times in the Bible, the word "and" is used 46,277 times and the word "girl" is found only once—in the third chapter and verse of Joel. (I'm surprised that girls were considered to be that important.)

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Word of God

The law of the Lord is perfect. The statutes of the Lord are right. The commandment of the Lord is pure.

(Psalms 19:7–8.)

Thus saith the Lord, Behold I frame evil against you and devise a device against you.

(Jeremiah 18:11.)

But just how did it all come together, as it were—this labor of theological love that we call the Bible?

Let us begin with the *Anno Domini* side of the historical ledger.

Way, way back, when Christianity was barely out of swaddling clothes (a mere three hundred years of age), a batch of theology-intensive patriarchs got together and drew lots (or flipped coins, or something) to determine what would be the official Word of God and what not. They amassed a hell of a lot of good grist for the Cecil B. DeMille mill and scrapped the rest.

The biblical books that are called today the four Gospels, a loosely contrived collection of Messiah-motivated anecdotes authored, nobody knows by whom, were officially assembled at the same time. Those documents, along with another collection of questionable tales, became known as the New Testament—a name used first by Tertullian and Melito.

Originally, the word "gospel" meant "good news." We speak today of *four* Gospels according to *four* different authors, even though the early Christians appeared to observe those writings somewhat differently. The *Canon of Muratori* spoke of only *one* Gospel, of which Matthew, Mark and Luke gave *three* different versions.

It is important to recognize that the early compilers of Holy Writ were quite selective—especially when it came to the New Testament. Few people seem to realize today that there were *many* gospel writings floating around in the early Christian era.

There were gospels according to the Ebionites, the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Nazoreans and the Hebrews. There were gospels according to various men, including a Barnabas, a Bartholomew and a Papias. And that was just the beginning. There were little books called Acts according to various Christian leaders. There were letters said to have been written by Jesus, Mary, Mary of Magdala, Joseph and the brothers and sisters of Jesus. There

were said to be quaintly detailed lives of Adam and Eve and of other persons in the Jewish religious books, not to mention the apocalypses of Noah, Abraham, Joshua, Isaac, David, Solomon, Elijah and Enoch, along with the testaments of Isaac, Jacob, Enoch, Daniel and others. There were books about Solomon telling of incredible wonders he supposedly performed; and booklets relating wondrous prophecies and miracles that were to come; and writings about persons who were said to have known Jesus, including two Roman emperors.

There were even "good news" books on the infancy and childhood of Jesus telling how he caused the sun to stand still; how with his own two hands he shaped animals of clay and brought them to life; and how he moved mountains and stilled the seas and hushed the winds and made barren trees give fruit, and with numerous other wondrous events proved that he was the long-awaited divine child. From the most fanciful minds of the time came the most wondrous events of all—those that occurred when the divine child was born. The temple of Apollo at Rome burst asunder and fell down; the earth opened in such wide clefts that the doomed souls in hell were able to come up and peer out; and it was a totally painless and bloodless birth for the mother—who, after the event, miraculously remained a virgin.

Considering the plethoric writings of the early Christians, it can be concluded with some certainty that what became known as the New Testament was not written all at once. There was no complete and clear-cut canon of the New Testament existing from the very beginning, and there is absolutely no evidence that any gospels purporting to be the modern four Gospels existed in the 1st century, or that any other than fragmentary literature of this character existed even in the 2nd century. Another point: The Gospels, rather than being the products of single authors, appear to be composite works—literary basins, to be sure—into which many sources flowed. (Consider the Matthew book, for a moment. Could any one person write of Joseph's pedigree AND the account of the virgin birth? Could any one person have Jesus attack Jewish laws AND, in practically the same breath, censure the slightest departure from them? The odds in favor of that happening seem slim to the point of an unimaginable possibility.) The first stories were merely brief units—which were only later joined together—made up of legends and myths and the "naïve products of the folkmind," as an unregenerate cynic was inclined to put it. Ernest Renan compares them with the legends of the saints and with the lives of people like Plotinus, Proclus and Isidore.

Regarding the Christian writings dealing specifically with the legend of Jesus Christ, many were called presumably, but only four composite efforts were finally chosen. Why? Perhaps because there were four winds, or four zones; or maybe because there were four principal churches—Jerusalem, Rome, Antioch and Ephesus.

The Gospels as they were first written are long gone. Most of the original manuscripts perished early on; and most of the copies made during the first three centuries were quickly destroyed. There is not a single copy free of mistakes available to us; and no two copies agree. Rather than certain, precise, traditional and historical records, we have to the contrary, hypothetical, vague, legendary and partisan accounts. To put it another way, the Gospels can be described as follows: One is Orphic, one is Greek, one is Egyptian,

one is Jewish, and all are mixed up, intermingled and blended—but very poorly blended.

As far as the oldest *extant* copies are concerned, they only go back to the 3rd century. There is a *possible* allusion (questionable to some scholars) to Mark by Papias about A.D. 120. Otherwise, no Christian of the first half of the 2nd century quotes the Gospels or their reputed authors. The evidence indicates that even *a hundred years after Jesus' death* there was only a scanty use of the Gospels by Christians. This seems amazing. But it also seems to verify the view that when the Gospels appeared they were by no means accorded universal acclaim.

Regarding the redaction, or putting into form of the Gospels, the best ball-park estimate of the many scholars who have studied them indicates that the blending together of the first units, or bits and pieces of the Christian writings that were eventually to become the official Gospels, took place between A.D. 70 and A.D. 125, long after the time when Jesus supposedly lived and died—a passage of time that saw the beliefs and doctrines concerning the person of the Nazarene undergoing a profound transformation, and the interests of dogma coming to far outweigh any care for historical accuracy.

In all likelihood, the writings that were given the name of Mark came first, then the Matthew, Luke and John efforts, the second two based largely on the first, the fourth possibly written independently of the three. The first three have been called "Synoptic" since they are sufficiently alike for it to be possible to arrange their contents in parallel columns giving a sort of synopsis of the facts which they have in common. The Gospel of John doesn't fall into this category; it seems to be the most curious of all. It recounts episodes that do not appear in the other three. The Jesus of John—his character, his behavior, his attitude toward Jews and the tone of his discourses—is quite inexplicably different from the one implied by the Synoptic tradition.

Some scholars see the work of Hellenistic Jews inspired by Philo in John; they think that its phraseology is Jewish through and through. A Jewish scholar named Pfeiffer, on the other hand, describes it as "the most anti-Jewish book in the New Testament." And no one knows who wrote it. Tradition ascribes it to John the son of Zebedee; but this theory doesn't mesh with critical probability.

In the final analysis, practically all reputable scholars accept the view that the Christians systematically edited and altered the Gospel stories over a period of many generations. Indeed, no one knows to this day when the form of the Gospels as they exist now was accepted without further editing and changing. To cite but one interesting example, before the Council of Nicaea in 325, Eusebius time and again quoted the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19 as follows: "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations in my name."

There are countless contradictions in the four works, and those historians who are capable of facing this conundrum with objectivity conclude that the Jesus stories were compiled out of narratives and sayings known in different communities, with different traditions and in some respects different stories, and that they were exposed to varied and incalculable influences in the in-

terests of different doctrines and communities. And before they took the form we have been instructed to believe and love, hundreds of years passed. (You don't learn about things like this in Sunday School, do you kids?)

More notable among the many contradictions in the Gospels are the ones involving the visitors to the sepulcher. According to John, Mary Magdalene came unto the sepulcher the first day of the week; Matthew thought it was Mary Magdalene and the *other Mary;* to Mark, the visitors were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome; and Luke not only introduced the mysterious Joanna to the group including Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, but also the *other women* who were with them.

Among other contradictions, the Synoptics limit the duration of the public career of Jesus to one year at most. John extends it to two, or even three years. John tells us that Jesus went up to the Holy City five times, while the Synoptics take him there only once. And John reveals that Jesus celebrated *three* Easter festivals with his disciples instead of only *one,* and that he died on the 14th and not on the 15th day of the month of *Nisan.*

Luke alone tells the story of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple. Four brothers and several sisters are mentioned in Mark; and we do not learn where his age placed him among the children. In addition, nothing is said anywhere about the physical appearance of the Nazarene or the state of his health or even the language he spoke.

Jesus speaks about marriage in a very natural and affirmative way in Matthew; shortly thereafter, he dwells with approval upon castrates and those who have made themselves such for the kingdom of God. To a degree, Jesus is portrayed in the Gospels as a kindly, gentle fellow who comes to bring peace and love; but he also comes to bring the sword. He has quite a temper, too; he doesn't always adhere to the admonition about "turning the other cheek." He curses the hell out of the fig tree, he pronounces a curse over the Galilean cities which remain unrepentant, he condemns Jerusalem to become a waste, he advises his devoted followers to come to him totally devoid of any love or feeling for their relatives, and in the telling of the parable of the ten pieces of money, he seems to advocate that the enemies of the one who would "reign over them" should be ruthlessly slain.

For reasons that involve contradictions on the one hand, and suggestions of delusions of grandeur, hallucinations and paranoia on the other, many of the acts and utterances of Jesus impress some authors as pathological. Emil Rasmussen, for instance, goes to great lengths to compare Jesus with Buddha, Mohammed, the Jewish prophets, Paul, Luther, Sabbatai Zewi of Asia Minor, Swedenborg, the Mahdi, the saints from the Abruzzi Mountains, Mirza Ali Mohammed and Mirza Hussein Ali, David Lazzaretti the founder of Bahaism, and the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, for the purpose of revealing a picture of mental sickness in these religious philosophers and men of God—"a malady that can be diagnosed by the psychiatrist as precisely the disease of epileptic psychosis." (But that's another story.)

Determining who's who in the New Testament can also be something of a problem.

Luke tells us that Jesus was encountered by two of his followers after the resurrection. Only one of them was named: *Cleopas.* Was the unnamed man Simeon, the son of Cleopas? What, or who, was the source for this story?

And if the two were relatives of Jesus, why were their eyes "kept from recognizing him"? (We have it on no less an authority than Hegesippus that the Cleopas that Luke talks about—24:18—was the brother of Joseph the erstwhile father of Jesus and therefore his uncle. Simeon then, who eventually became the head of the Nazoreans, was a first cousin of Jesus. Right?)

Luke informs us too, that several women traveled with Jesus and helped to supply his wants from their means. We are told of Mary the Magdalene, of Joanna the wife of Chuza, steward to Herod Antipas, and *Susanna*. Who is the beautifully named Susanna? (Ohhhhh Susannaaaaaaaa, who on earth can you beeeeeeeeeee???????)

The Evangelists find it difficult, not only to identify the family of Jesus, but even the Twelve Apostles. At first glance, this seems extraordinary. Yet, it is perfectly understandable when we realize that all they had to work with were the bits and scraps of writings and the oral testimony of persons remote both in time and locality from the actual events. The Evangelists (or whoever) could not ask questions and they could not seek rectification of discrepancies.

Mark and Matthew contain virtually identical lists of the Twelve Apostles. Luke has two lists in which he identifies Simon the Cananean as Simon the Zealot (6:13–16, and Acts 1:13). In the place of Thaddaeus-Lebbaeus, however, he provides us with a Judas, who is a brother of *Jacob* called James. But *which* Jacob is he referring to? Jacob son of Alphaeus or Halphaeus?

John's Gospel doesn't list all the Apostles, but he does make reference to at least some of the Twelve: Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael of Cana, Jacob and John the sons of Zebedee and a couple of others who are unnamed. We also have John mentioning Philip, Judas Iscariot and *another* Judas (not Iscariot). And who is the Nathanael he refers to? Is he the same as Bartholomew, which means son of Tolmai or Ptolemy? And who is that *other* Judas among the Twelve who was *not* Iscariot?

And what of *Thomas-Didymus?* That, by the way, is not a name; it is a descriptive term—and both words mean *Twin*. The name is always given in early Syriac literature as Judas Thomas, meaning Judas the Twin. *Whose* twin he is, however, we don't know. Luke calls him Judas of Jacob. Could he have been the twin brother of Jacob and, for obvious reasons, called Thomas? And what of John's Gospel where we find the *other* Judas, not Iscariot, and a completely *different* Thomas? A legend suggests that Judas Twin bore a striking resemblance to Jesus and therefore received his name for that reason. On the other hand, we have the legend about Judas Iscariot being made to look like the Nazarene so he could suffer and die on the cross instead of Jesus. After wending one's way through this maze it's difficult to avoid the rather improbable conclusion that there were *three* persons among the Twelve Disciples with the name *Judas*. So where does that leave us? (Oh well . . .)

Not only did they scrap numerous gospels of the day, those early fashioners of the "Word of God" omitted the *Apocrypha*. (Nobody saluted when they ran it up the flagpole, apparently.)

The word "Apocrypha" comes from the Greek word *apocryphos,* meaning "hidden"—which is the equivalent of a Hebrew term derived from a

root meaning "to store up" . . . or/also, "to store up in secret." According to Guignebert, the Apocrypha of the New Testament offered "a somewhat lengthy history of the development of the legend of Jesus," and "the amazing inventions of a faith which, desirous of leaving no part of the human existence of the Lord unexplored, pictured it in the terms of its own imaginings, as a dazzlingly miraculous folk tale."

Ernest Renan was less charitable when he delivered his verdict. He dismissed the Apocrypha as being little more than "uninteresting and puerile elaborations, based on the canonical gospels and adding nothing of value." It is well known, he might have added, that from all literary and historical points of view, a Bible *without* an Apocrypha is a *shorter* Bible.

Anyway, the Apocrypha, comprising some fourteen or more books including that enchantingly entitled volume, "The Book of the Wars of the Lord," was later patched up and put to some use or other. That busy bee Origen originally termed them Apocryphal.

But to go even farther back (to the *Before Domini* era, I mean) in our examination of the beginnings of the Bible, certain sources indicate that Hebrew scribes began carefully and faithfully preserving every "jot and tittle" of the stuff they had purloined from the Chaldaeo-Babylonian and Egyptian civilizations about the 12th century B.C. While this viewpoint is denied with considerable heat by numerous theological types, a few scholars are inclined to give it some credence. Detractors are fond of emphasizing that not a little evidence points to the influence of neighboring cultures upon the thinking and the customs of the Israelites.

There is some similarity between the commandments as we know them and those of such peoples as the Babylonians and the Egyptians, since some of them are paralleled in "Egyptian Sacred Law" and in the code of Hammurabi—both in existence long before the time of Moses. The Babylonian story of creation, for instance, has every appearance of being the source of the one in Genesis. And take the hymn written by the religious Pharaoh Akhnaten who changed the Egyptian state religion to the worship of a single god in 1287 B.C. That sacred song of adoration is an almost exact duplicate of the 10th Psalm.

From another standpoint, however, we find that the Bible very carefully records numerous stupendous events that supposedly occurred while the people of Israel were in captivity in Egypt, events which find *no* parallel in Egyptian history—a curious situation that prompts the skeptic to wonder why in so precisely annotated a culture as the Egyptian, whose history is so clearly written in stone, that there is no mention of the events such as the plagues and various scourges and disasters. (There always seems to be a skeptic in the woodpile.)

From these intriguing historical deductions, it isn't a difficult leap to the conclusion that the people of Israel were up to the old trick of padding their historical part, as it were, for the purpose of playing to the hilt more fully the old "I am forever oppressed" game. (The paranoia of the collective unconscious, perhaps, consciously at work.)

In any event, the earliest of the biblical records seem to be those that later became known as the Elohistic or E. document and the Yahwistic or J. document (dating from about 750 B.C.)—so named, because the authors

of said documents are supposed to have identified their respective Gods as "Elohim" and "Yahweh," which is relevant enough, I suppose. These two repetitious, yet contradictious narratives, each containing a distinct, though different version of the creation, make up the Book of Genesis, the very first book of "The Books."

It is easier to appreciate the complexity of this lengthy and ponderous volume of books if one thinks of the Hebrew Bible as being divided into three parts: (1) The *Torah,* "Law," or Pentateuch (the traditional Christian name for the first five books of the Bible). (2) The Prophets . . . (3) The Kethubim, or the "Writings," generally termed Hagiographa, or inspired.

Along about 400 B.C., Ezra's stint in history (Ezra was a famous Hebrew prophet), the first five books of the Old Testament, appropriately entitled "Law of Moses" (because these writings deal with a lot more "Thou shalt nots" than "Thou shalts"), were edited. The "Law," as all but the most dimwitted have always been able to see, was originally composed "directly under prophetic influence" by Moses—whose contemporaries were lavish with their warm regard for him. "Of this man Moses," they said, "we wot not what is become of him."

CHAPTER NINE

Moses Somebody

And the Lord Spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend.

(Exodus 33:11.)

And he said, thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live.

(Exodus 33:20.)

A moment for the "Lawgiver" . . .

When but a wee mite, Moses—as any schoolchild knows—was cast into the waters because God had dealt well with the midwives and the population had waxed mighty; besides, nobody wanted him. But someone fished him out so he could tend Jethro's flocks, sing ditties about the Lord, and be raved about in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. (They did things funny in those days, didn't they?)

Moses (the name may have come from *mesu,* meaning child, or it may have meant water-child, or it may have meant hero; take your choice) was supposed to have been the son of a daughter of Levi; but he could have been almost anybody really, so don't be afraid to tack him onto your family tree if you are so inclined. (But I wouldn't strain the point.)

Legend has it that Moses was something of a mover and shaker; and the aforementioned four biblical books—Exodus, etc., etc., etc.—are respectfully dedicated to the proposition that he was really the cat's spats. Personally, I think he was something of a schmegeggy (plainly a thought a great many people will not go for). His only claim to fame lies in the fact that he was God's number one messenger boy. (Of course, I wouldn't turn up my nose at the job.)

Well, it came to pass one day that the Jewish God said unto Moses, "I Am That I Am!"—a passing pronouncement that had such a staggering effect upon the lad that he never quite got over it; and quicker than you could say *Melchizedek,* he and Yahweh were practically soul brothers.

Incidentally, after the "I Am That I Am" business, several startling though soap-operaish events take place: Moses' rod is turned into a serpent, a river is turned into blood, dust turns into lice, and the land is overrun with frogs, flies, fleas, beasts, boils, blains, hail, locusts, darkness, plagues, people and lordy knows what all—all of which was supposed to have softened Pharaoh's heart so he would let the children of Israel, who were in captivity at

the time, go out of Egypt. But Pharaoh wasn't a man to be trifled with; besides, the Lord had *hardened* Pharaoh's heart, so that he would *not* let the children of Israel go.

Should this curious plot sound rather devilishly contrived to the reader, be it known that there is method in the deviousness of it. The fact that Pharaoh is prevented from letting the Israelites go paves the way for one of those supreme acts of divine vengeance the Old Testament Jewish God is so well noted for. Here's the scenario: At midnight, in accordance with a promise made to Moses, Yahweh goes out into the midst of Egypt and slaughters all the firstborn in the land, "from the firstborn of Pharaoh unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts." At that point, Pharaoh suddenly found himself soft of heart and ready to cry UNCLE! "Stop, stand, cool it!" he probably shouted to the Jewish God. "If you're going to get testy, let's forget the whole deal!" And he promptly sought out Moses and said unto him, "Get thee out, the whole bunch of you, and don't ever darken our Egyptian doors again!" or something along those lines.

And thus it was that "Israel went out of Egypt" ("Out of Egypt have I called my son . . .").

Now that things are looking up for his tribe, it soon comes to pass that Moses decides to blossom forth with his first aria of ecstasy dedicated to Yahweh, in which he croons, and I quote, "The Lord is a man of war." (Isn't that an invigorating thought, though?) Not long thereafter, we arrive at those momentous occurrences on Mount Sinai where, amid a cacophony of thunder, lightning and other heavenly orgasms, there was established, or handed down from on high, that ironclad pattern of divine regulations for life and living guaranteed to produce results of sorts—THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (you know, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's ass or bullock or whatever). But there was much more to the LAW than just the Big Ten. There were multitudinous other engaging and highly provocative "do not" (and even some "do") observances, such as laws for menservants, for womenservants, for touching unclean things, for eating the wrong beasts, for purifying women after childbirth, for the cleansing of lepers, for unlawful lusts, for manstealers, for smiters, for going to wizards, and for heaven knows who else or what all.

Luckily, not everything was banned—as an anonymous poet has succinctly observed:

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife
Nor the ox that her husband bought her;
But thank the Lord you're not forbidden
To covet thy neighbor's daughter.

CHAPTER TEN

A Plethora of Mitzvoth

Therefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgements whereby they should not live.
(Malachi 2:3.)

God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.
(I Corinthians 14:33.)

If an ox does someone unto his death—which, be it known, is a very gross kind of behavior—both the ox and the master must be thereby done unto death. (Remind me never to own an ox; they must be shifty beasts.)

The Christians were, for quite some time, more than a little intrigued with the custom of condemning and executing criminal beasts: the sow which had devoured a child, or the ox which had gored a man; and they carried it well into the Middle Ages. Sometimes an animal would even be interdicted from the rites of the church by ecclesiastical censure. At least 86 cases of animal excommunication have been unearthed by an enthusiastic antiquary who just loves digging up things like that.

"Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together." (Plumbing the very depths of intolerance, if you ask me.)

By the by, a person can be put to death for stealing a man and selling him—a mitzvah that hasn't commanded a great deal of attention over the ages. (Nothing is said about women, though.)

Here's another one that smacks of sheer intolerance: "Whosoever lieth with a beast shall be put to death." (Rumor has it the Llama is *numero uno*.)

For a couple of truly enticing restrictions, consider these:

"Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk . . ."

"A man shall not discover his father's skirt . . ."

As I understand it, the rabbis of old declared that each passage of the Law had seventy distinct meanings, and that the Jewish God Himself gave three hours every day to their study. (I can see why.)

"If a man be wounded in his stones, or hath no sporting member, he shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord." Makes you wonder what they must have thought the Jewish God and his congregation were up to in those days since the company of sexually incompetent males within the Pearly Gates was frowned upon. At best, it makes heaven sound like an all-male beer-hall made up of a bunch of jolly good fellows (with healthy "sporting members") who could very well be a little gay around the edges. (Well . . .

if good "straights" can go to heaven, why can't good "gays?")

I'm reminded at this point of that long-headed theological commentator, Thomas Aquinas, who dedicated so much of his time to the art of abstracting out ascertained facts by means of metaphysical formulas, who once observed that "There can be no falsehood anywhere in the literal sense of the Holy Scripture." (Old Tom must have been a grave sort.)

And we must not overlook the poignant phraseology of Pope Leo XIII (or was it Leo X?): "It is absolutely wrong and forbidden, either to narrow inspiration to certain parts of Holy Scripture or to admit that the sacred writer erred." It was one of these same Leo's, I think, who once tacitly mused, as he gazed across his flowering estates, "All this we have through the legend of Jesus Christ." (A Pope should know, I suppose.)

I don't know what it is with the Ammonites and the Moabites, but that "reserved right to refuse service" sign is out when they show up at the Pearly Gates. (If you are one, nose bobbing might help; but don't bank on it.) Oh yes, I remember now. They were the products of Lot's incest with his daughters. (As if they could help it.) But then, don't forget, "God visits the sins of the fathers upon their children . . . even unto the third and fourth generations," and all that ill-starred jazz.

Even the poor "bastard" can't get into the priggish "congregation of the Lord," better known as the Heavenly Kingdom, according to the inflexible and infallible law laid down by the Jewish God. (That lets a lot of us out, doesn't it?)

So saith the Jewish God unto the Israelites, "Thou art an holy people chosen above all other peoples upon the face of the earth."

Occasionally I get the impression that our biblical authors were Israelites—cynic that I am. For much the same somewhat sardonic reason, Xenophanes once commented that a Negro's god would have a flat nose, a Thracian's god would have blue eyes, and if an ox had a god it would of course look like an ox. To which he might have added that if the rain forest pygmies had written the Bible, the pygmies would be the "chosen people," and if women had written the Bible, Eve would never have been made the villain in the snake story. (Now that we've beaten another dead horse, let's get on with the business at hand.)

Just in passing, here is an intriguing note: "Giants dwelt therein in old times; and the Ammonites called them Zamzummims." (Now there is a name for all seasons: ZAM-ZUM-MIMS . . . cha, cha, cha.)

For those devout souls who may wish to participate in the good old-fashioned pastime of the *sacrifice,* here is the straight poop on exactly how to go about it, right from the horse's mouth as it were, the Pentateuch.

You must carve your ark and tabernacle out of Shittim wood (which comes from Shittim, most likely); sprinkle liberally with lamb's blood; and offer every day a bullock for a sin.

Note to you lustier souls: Certain biblical ancients recommend that if small, plump, firstborn children are offered in the sacrificial sport, forthcoming results will be wonderfully splendrous, to say the least. (Archeological excavations reveal that the Canaanites buried hundreds of infants, either alive or dead, in stone jars, and well-attested instances of a similar nature are recorded even among the Hebrews. Indeed, some scholars think that the

immolation of infants in walls was a Hebrew practice until long after Solomon's time—a subject seldom chosen for deliberation in your average Bible class, right, kids?)

But do not use leavened bread (bread which hath that ingredient included to make it ferment) in your sacrifice; this is a must. And above all, do not let the fat of your sacrifice remain until morning. Be neat.

On the other hand, discretion is advised; i.e., don't overdo it. The Lord, whose name is *Impatient,* has been known to react with some testiness to an overt case of brown-nosing. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?" objecteth the Jewish God in Isaiah. "I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs, or of he goats. Bring me no more vain oblations."

Now, good luck, have fun, and remember, any substitution for Shittim wood is objected to with considerable heat. (Be not misled, either. Jerome gives a fine description of Shittim wood, but it sounds suspiciously like black acacia.)

Scholars who know about these things tell us that the time-honored ritual of the sacrifice appears to have evolved along the following lines: first, the god himself was eaten, in the form in which he was represented, whether as man or beast, to absorb his virtues; and because he was the *Baal* or owner of the land he was given the first-fruits, including first-born sons.

The unwritten law dealing with the problem of how one can participate in his friendly neighborhood cult and still survive involves the selection of a practical method of satisfying the religious conditions of the tribe or society. It is more practical to sacrifice a part of the individual rather than the whole individual, right? And rather than sacrifice the *whole* organ—the penis, for instance—it is more practical to sacrifice a *part* of the penis. (I'll drink to that.)

Circumcision is a good example of a ritual that evolved as a very practical substitution that provided the individual with the opportunity to participate in all the fun and games of his religion without his being turned into a sexual has-been.

The "worship of Priapus" dates back thousands of years before the present-day conception of deity was even developed. Since the sexual function was considered to be the main factor in the "divine life" of the phallic cult, and since therefore, the sexual organ was thought to be holy, the conception of total or partial sacrifice of that organ could easily have become attached to it. All religions which have survived have learned to make abundant use of the art of investing things with symbolic meaning and the evidence seems to indicate that circumcision has survived as a symbol of a more radical type of sacrifice.

The Old Testament tells us that the Israelites were big on circumcision. (Border inspections must have been trying in those days.) They even gave the procedure a new and unheard-of meaning by making it a special deal with God so that the rite would be a convenant or free promise of God's blessing between them and Yahweh. Abram, who subsequently became known as Abraham (God called him Abe), was the first to go under the knife—

among the Jews, that is. (Rumor has it they picked up the idea while vacationing in Egypt.)

To put it mildly, the idea developed into quite a thing after that, and before you could say *Zephaniah,* you just weren't anybody unless you'd had an operation. Even the Lord said so. (I don't get the connection, myself. What's a foreskin between friends?)

"Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked," says the Bible—Deuteronomy, 10:16, to be exact. (The relative values of this metaphorical giant escape me. It does wreak havoc with the imagination, though.)

Next in the parade of "thou shalt nots" is this provocative NO-NO: "If mankind lieth with mankind as he lieth with woman, both shall be put to death."

The point here is clear enough, I suppose; but really, isn't that a rather silly way of putting it? When the Bible speaks of the male *lying* with the female in what has been referred to as "the biblical sense," a conjunction of sexual organs is naturally implied. A man can "sodomize" both males and females, of course, and if you want to call *that* "lying together," go right ahead. (By the way, there's no indication that it's wrong to sodomize *women;* so I guess that's okay.) Anyway, to my way of thinking *sodomy* is nothing more than a peculiar pastime engaged in by peculiar people with peculiar tastes—a product of the "different strokes for different folks" philosophy.

The name sodomy, be it noted, is derived from the name of Gomorrah's sister city Sodom, which lets us know right away the kind of monkey business that was going on there. You see, after the big flood that flushed out all the sin and sinners on the earth, it didn't take man long to start thinking for himself again, and in a couple of stenchy little hamlets named Sodom and Gomorrah that had been plying the tourist trade, things went from wicked to worse in short order.

To say little or nothing, the Jewish God was put out about all this backsliding. He had given up the flood business for a bad job by that time, but something had to be done; so He up and rained all over Sodom and Gomorrah. This time He didn't use water; and what was left you could stuff through the eye of a needle. (Naturally, that didn't solve anything.) As a result, God put Sodom on the map, and that gave us the word "sodomy."

Incidentally, both Christians and Jews have always been rather stuffy about sodomy—classically known as *coitus analis cum puella* or *cum puero,* and commonly known as the Greek technique, or "entering the back door" ("cornholing," in the vernacular of the streets).

The Christian Establishment tells us that sodomy was practiced on an appalling scale by the ancient Greeks and Romans. But not a few moderns have succumbed to the enchantments of the activity. "When I've enough of the girl," writes Goethe, "she'll play the boy for me, too." (Whoopee!) And we also have the testimony of an associate of John Maynard Keynes, the famous British economist who worshiped at the altar of Fabian socialism. One of Keynes' inamoratos, Lytton Strachey, wrote a poetic amoretto about Keynes in which he classed him, "A liberal and a sodomite . . ." And Keynes' letters reveal that he was fond of visiting those Mediterranean areas

(Tunis, Algeria, Morocco, Egypt and Istanbul) where brothels could be found in which male children were provided for the purpose of satisfying the desires of the high-born—in Keynes' words, "where bed and boy were also not expensive." (Different strokes, etc., etc.)

In case you are wondering how many homosexuals and assorted sodomites have been executed during the 2500 odd years application of the aforesaid biblical injunction, be advised that questions of this nature are frowned upon by the Jewish and Christian establishments.

Along about Exodus 22:18, I chanced upon the following mitzvah of sagacity: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." (You should just hear the apologists hedge about this enthusiastically enforced "Good Book" statute.)

After the establishment of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in the 13th century, the Christian power structure labored assiduously to see that the rank and file was purged of witches and witchcraft, a theological labor of love performed under the sanction of a glorious crusade for the redemption of mankind. With burning alive being carried out in a wholesale and official fashion as never before, and torture being applied with equally unprecedented frequency and dedicated cruelty, it comes as no surprise to learn that no clear case of a verdict of *not guilty* seems ever to have been recorded. Indeed, one of the inquisitors once boasted that if he could place the Pope himself on the rack he would guarantee to induce him to plead guilty. (They did good work in those days.)

Happily, witches have been in short supply ever since.

Finally, as we wind up our patchwork examination of the Pentateuch, here are a few fanciful mitzvoth in passing:

Be careful what you eat, why you drink, where you sleep and how you make merry. Lie carnally with only the right people (not a particularly illuminating evaluation); and for mercy's sake, don't choose your Holy One hit and miss. Be selective! For the Jewish God whose name is *Jealous* is a jealous God, so thou must have none other Gods before Him. Not even WAMPUM.

Much remains to be said as regards Exodus, etc., etc., etc., and Moses . . . but I find myself at ragged ends to proceed. Too much of a questionable entity is precisely that—*too much*.

So, I will be brief.

Lots of Moses' later life was dedicated to pulling up stakes at one place and pitching his tents at another whilst he was industriously engaged in the disposal of Ammorites, Moabites, Midianites, Balaamites, Canaanites, and other troublesomeites, all done in accordance with orders from headquarters—the Jewish God, I mean. Virgins were always spared, however. (I hesitate to imagine that it was for the obvious reason.)

Everybody seems to think that Moses was such a good old boy. "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth," Numbers tells us. But don't you believe it. When Moses was wroth, boy, he was *really* wroth. "Now, therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man," commands the meek and mild Moses in another part of the Numbers forest. "But all the women children that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves."

And nobody seems to remember that Moses killed 70,000 Jews in one day for the act of Korach, or so the story goes. Korach, you should know, was the guy who incited the people to build the golden calf while Moses was up on the mountain sweating over the Ten Commandments.

I can understand why God and Moses would be a little put out about Korach sneaking around behind their backs trying to sucker the folks into worshiping another god or two. Still, I can't help but think that a penalty of 70,000 deaths for the transgression represents something of an over-reaction. (But you can make up your own minds about that.)

At least there is one thing you can say about Moses: he was democratic. He wasn't above believing that there were always several points of view on every subject: HIS—and those which belonged to the idiots who disagreed with him.

Moses died at the prime age of one hundred and twenty on the top of Mount Nebo overlooking his ill-gotten gains. His estimable biographers (or whoever) ardently state that, "His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated; and no man knoweth of his sepulcher to this day."

Thank heaven for small miracles!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Nun's Son

Thou shalt not kill.

(Exodus 20:13.)

Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.

(Exodus 32:27.)

We cannot continue to chart the course of biblical development without taking a somewhat incisive glance at Joshua—an old toot whom I shall dwell on but shortly, for this pompous enforcer for the Lord is hardly one of my favorite people. Joshua would stoop to killing almost anybody. (Bad habits are one thing, but promiscuity is unforgivable.) By the way, he was Nun's son, whatever that proves.

When Josh was a youngish chap of questionable manias he must have been dropped on a battleaxe, for we find in him a neat blending of the homicidal with excessive paranoia. This, I believe, amounts to as good an excuse as any for his cavorting about the landscape clobbering as many heretical monarchs and as many of their constituents as time and nature would allow—a procedure popularly known in theological circles as "keeping the faith."

After Moses joined the heavenly circus, Joshua moved up as top patriarchal dog, whereupon the Jewish God gave him enough rope—plus all the territory Josh might happen to tread upon with his big foot. Taking this news with some intensity, Josh whetted his circumcision knife, trotted off from a place called Shittim (the home of Shittim wood, no doubt), marched his way through the waters of the Jordan (I told you they did things funny in those days) and put the bite on Jericho. "Whereupon Jericho was straightly shut up." How do we know? The Bible tells us so.

Now, I cannot tell a lie!

Joshua did not toot the fence down with his little horn. (From whence cometh such absurdities, I wonder?) It happened thus: Josh had some of his cats jazz it up around the place on their ram's horns for *six* days. (To rattle the inmates, most likely.) On the seventh day, Joshua wobbled his javelin, whereupon all his people wobbled their uvulas and whooped it up something

awful, and lo and behold, the wall lay right down and said "uncle." Then Josh and his gang swooped into town and just had a ball slaughtering all the inhabitants. All, that is, except a lady (with a shaky reputation) named Rahab, and all the people in her house (which just happened to be in the red-light district). The reason given for this momentary infatuation with humanitarianism was that Rahab had consorted with Joshua's spies; but considering her rather shady rep, I'm inclined to believe that Josh had some other bone or two to pick with her. (Well, maybe she was a good seamstress.)

The Christian Establishment likes to tell us that if we would just examine the battle of Jericho and all its attendant atrocities in the right light, we would find it to be a glorious example of God's justice on man's rebellion. (A characteristic of the Christian apologist, it seems, is his utter inability to be embarrassed.) The people of Jericho, you see, were God's enemies, and they were barricading themselves against God's people, and since the Jewish God couldn't tolerate that insulting intransigence, He pronounced a judgement on the whole city and had His number one enforcer, Joshua, carry it out; and before you could say *Deuteronomy,* the "sword of the Lord" was "filled with blood and made fat with fatness," to use the pregnant terminology of Isaiah.

After the Jericho jubilee it's significant that Josh's fame was noised about the countryside (I'm not surprised); and in no time at all, there was just no upstaging the boy. He went on to even greater heights—"seizing the moon in his teeth," as it were—in the course of raping, razing and generally laying waste some thirty and one kingdoms, including Ammorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Parasites and divers others. (He simply couldn't keep a sharp edge on his sword.) Thanks to Joshua, many of these peoples are now extinct. (The *Parasites* are still with us, unfortunately.) It's also significant that not one city made peace with him. (I'm not surprised at that, either.)

What happened next is nobody's business, except that Josh and his bludgeon-happy tribe wound up with more of the map than is usually allotted to robber-barons. All he had to do was saunter up to a prospective client with that "remember Jericho" look on his puss, and in no time at all he had inherited some more real estate. "And that day Joshua took Makkeday, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and all the souls that were therein; he let none remain;" and he "smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings; he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded . . ." (See what I mean?)

It was Joshua, you know, who took Achan and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and all that he had, and stoned the hell out of them, and then burned them with fire. Achan, you see, had taken some gold from the city, and had kept it back from the priests. Achan learned the hard way that you can only go so far in testing the bounds of theological benevolence.

But one fine day Joshua was astounded to hear of some places he hadn't even sacked yet. Like Alexander, one of his successors in the conquering business, Josh never quite recovered from that blow. He succumbed soon thereafter, one hundred and ten years young, from a surfeit of pique.

It could be that this paragon of intolerance was merely trying to get ahead,

who knows; but take him for all in all, let's hope that we shall not look upon his like again. Patriarchal conquerors are not very exalted specimens of a not very exalted profession; and it's high time that we stopped raving about them—*and naming our children after them* (Joshua is a popularly chosen name for male children in the late 20th century America.)

He did all right, though. Thirty and one are a lot of kingdoms in any man's palaver.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Masoretic Text

There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.

(Job 34:21–22.)

And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and, if not, I will know.

(Genesis 18:20–21.)

Around the turn of the 2nd century A.D. or perhaps a little earlier, the original Hebrew or *Masoretic* text forming the basic model of the Old Testament was established as the standard for rabbinic Judaism. (The Masoretes were Jewish scholars after A.D. 70.)

The Masoretic text was written entirely in consonants. It is to be noted, too, that there were no divisions into chapters and verses, no system of punctuation was used, or even known at that time, and the Jews had no dictionary of their language—the results of which must have been an etymological misadventure that presented rather a perplexing crossword puzzle to the translators; a puzzle requiring considerably more of a revelation to decipher than to write.

There is an official explanation for the predicament.

As originally inspired and written the Bible had none of the rules and regulations or the invaluable marking points of separation that enable the reader to chart his or her way through the complexities of language. These were all added later by uninspired people, it seems, just as a matter of convenience in biblical study. (One can only wish they had been provided with the same inspiration as those who originally contributed to the project.) The origin of the customary division into chapters (formally attributed to Hugues de St. Cher and dated about 1262) is now dated about 1200 and assigned to Stephen Langton, later Archbishop of Canterbury, and the numbering of verses to Robert Stephen's Greek Testament, 1551 (an adaptation of the system of Rabbi Isaac Nathan, in his Hebrew Concordance, 1437–47; published Venice, 1523).

Now that we have cleared that portion of the air, let's take a look at one

of those all-consonant words—YHWH (a.k.a. JHWH), for instance; if YHWH can be called a word. Incidentally, YHWH appears 5989 times in the original Hebrew text, a rather portentous indication that it does have some significance. Scholars veer as to which of its varied meanings is the most legitimate. Some take it to mean *Yahweh,* the name of a terrible god lurking somewhere in a mountain. Isaiah, you may recall, speaks warmly of this deity: "Behold, the name of Yahweh cometh from afar, his anger burneth, and violently the smoke riseth on high; his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue is a devouring fire." (Sounds suspiciously like a volcano to me.)

A more popular theory remains that YHWH is an abbrevation for the divine name of a deity, the pronunciation of which was forbidden, back in those wary days. In light of the fact that said abbreviation certainly clobbered whatever word it was as far as pronunciation is concerned, said explanation may very well follow.

Fourteen centuries (give or take a hundred years or so) after the Hebrew text was established, a Christian monk who was ignorant of the rules of synagogue reading made *Jehovah* out of YHWH. (You may well ask how he did it.)

Unfortunately, since the 16th century (or thereabouts) the Christian Establishment has had an irritating way of using the name Jehovah at virtually every beck and call, with the result that Christian texts and biblical translations over the ages have been liberally sprinkled with the term. (Note how the name is injected into Exodus 6:3 to cleverly get around the fact that the Hebrews had never heard of it: "And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, *by the name of* God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.") It just didn't seem to penetrate the Christian mentality that Jehovah *never was* and *is not* a proper name for Israel's God. From David to the Exile the common name for deity was *Yah-Jah-Ye-Je-Yeho-Jeho* (to be pronounced trippingly on the tongue)—a tribal god whom the Israelites adopted from the Kenites. It was a lot later before they got down to the business of transforming *Yah* into a god who transcended the ancient limitations of tribal religion.

As far as that other somewhat favored name that translates into God is concerned—*Elohim,* I mean: the word is plural and may signify either the God of Israel, heathen gods, angels, or even men. (You can cover all sorts of ground with this one.)

El was the commonest of their names for deity, and this they used in many words: e.g., Beth-*el,* Isra-*el,* and Bab-*el,* which means literally the gate of god.

Curiously, the Christians, whilst maneuvering to determine the most effective manner of addressing *their* deity, never decided to make some use or other of SCHEMHAMPHORAS—that great mouthful of word embracing the 72 mystical names of God. Like an insurance policy of sorts, "Schemhamphoras" offers *full coverage*—which, obviously, would be a good thing.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Didache

Everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth.

(Matthew 7:8.)

They cried, but there was none to save them; even unto the Lord, but he answered them not.

(Psalms 18:41.)

I'll include for the reader's consideration now a description of rather an interesting document having stemmed directly from certain biblical material; it's a work known as the *Didache* (the word is Greek, and it means "teaching")—a two-faced sort of directive that was authored, it is believed, in the 2nd century A.D.

Primarily, the Didache includes a book of moral precepts, and a manual of church ordinances dedicated to the proposition that "there are two ways"—a doctrine expressing an appreciable flexibility often sadly non-existent in orthodoxy. "If thou canst not bear," it counseled, "bear what thou canst."

A brief quotation from this work reads as follows: "We give thanks unto thee, O our Father, for the holy vine of thy servant David which thou hast made known to us by thy servant Jesus." Notice that the same title, *servant,* is applied both to David and to Jesus. Perhaps the authors of the Didache were still under the influence of the earliest Christian beliefs regarding the Davidic line of descent leading from David to Joseph to the Messiah Jesus. (To the Jews, of course, the Messiah, "born of the seed of David according to the flesh," would have been not the *Son,* but the *Servant* of God, for such was the designation of the "men of Yahweh.")

It was only later that more astute Christians realized that if Jesus was to be the exclusive Son of God, he could not be the son of Joseph. "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" they wrote; thus specifying the mother to the exclusion of the father. And in Matthew we find this exclusionary form of expression: "And Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, and of *her* was born Jesus called the Christ." The implication here is that Joseph was only the *apparent* father of the child of his wife Mary. In other words, the more dedicated Christians realized early on that a savior-god born not of the blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God alone, was far more important than a Messiah cast in the limited Jewish image.

Beyond this point, the Didache is significant because of the very explicit

instructions it contained regarding that rite of initiation known as baptism. To the Christian Establishment baptism is one of the really *big* things, since that is the method by which the individual is admitted to the Christian community. Not only is the origin of the rite obscure, however, it is not known how or why it became the Christian rite of initiation.

It isn't widely known that many of the early Christians frowned upon the idea of baptism. As far as they were concerned, since the Twelve Apostles were not baptized, why should they make a federal case out of it? Somewhat later, Tertullian, one of the board members of the Christian power structure, successfully parried that argument by claiming that the Twelve were sprinkled when the spray dashed over the boat and Peter was immersed when he tried to walk on the waves. (Baptism by indirection, I would surmise.)

Certain scholars have advanced the theory that baptizing in the "Name" goes back to the ancient belief in magical ideas associated with the name of a person. Whatever the origin, most of the historians worth their salt claim that baptism in any form has no basis in the teaching of Jesus. They are inclined to believe, too, that Paul was the first to interpret baptism as a sacrament.

There are all kinds of ideas about what the rite was supposed to be. Justin spoke of baptism as an illumination; Barnabas identified the water with the cross; some of the later Christians spoke of the "new creating wave," a reference to a union with immortality; and Clement of Alexandria equated baptism with both illumination and immortality: "Being illuminated we become sons; being made sons, we are made perfect; being made perfect, we are made immortal."

The great French scholar Loisy probably placed the proper intellectual finger on the button in question when he explained that "Baptism is presented as an 'illumination' of which Jesus, needless to say, is the sun . . ."; the implication being that the rite evolved from pagan rituals involving the worship of a sun-god. Baptism preceded initiation into the mysteries of other cult-figures, Isis and Mithra, for example, and it was chosen as a similar symbol—"Die and become!"—by the Christians.

To gain admission to the mysteries of Christianity the novice must tread the path of the god; as the god dies and is reborn the novice dies to his old life and is born again to the new. The plunge beneath the water represents death—death to the old pre-Christian way of living, with the sins of the old way of life being "washed away" or exorcised, as it were, with all the demons cast out along with the sins, bringing magically into existence (hallelujah brother!) a *new man* (or woman).

The "born again" craze of the evangelicalists of the 19th and 20th centuries (those who adhere to the interpretation of Christianity which emphasizes man's fallen condition, the atonement of Christ, necessity of new birth, and redemption through faith) involves the clever use of a "rebirth to a new life" gimcrack by those Christian sects called *orthodox*—in distinction from Unitarians, Universalists and kindred sects—which gives their churches an additional appeal when it comes to the recruiting of parishioners from other Christian denominations.

When a person is baptized into the Christian faith he is "born again" once and for all, just as he is once and for all a baptized Christian. He can profess

to leave the faith, of course; nonetheless, the baptism cannot be undone. Believe in it or not, it happened. To suggest, therefore, that a person can be "born again" *twice* is patently absurd. (To be "born again" *once* makes, I should think, enough ripples in the waters of nonsensicality.) This symbolic baptismal gimmick pays a high psychological dividend to the believer, however. "Hey, look at me," he can say. "I'm starting all over. I've been reborn. I've shucked off all the sins I collected since my first baptism—I don't have to worry about them anymore—and now I've got a clean slate. Whoopedoo!"

The "born again" phenomenon represents a neat blending of theological conning and individual copping out. It's right at home, of course, in a simplistic sectarian society.

Regardless of the importance of baptism to the Christian system, the fact must be noted that the Christians have no exclusive claim to the procedure. Even infant baptism was an ordinary Roman rite; so the Christians hardly have a case when they shout from the cathedral tops that the rite is a *mysterium salutare* unique to their faith. Not that the Christians didn't work overtime to turn baptism into something uniquely Christian. Tragically, the newly established Church became so obsessed with the mystical powers of the rite that it quickly accepted as an article of faith the belief that all infants who died prior to baptism would plummet straight into the eternal fires of hell—"a teaching before undreamt of," as J. M. Robertson describes it. Since those infants had been born with original sin on their souls (the "taint inherited from the fallen Adam"), and since that terrible stain had not been erased by the sacramental rite of baptism, they were automatically condemned to burn in perdition forever.

For many centuries the Catholic Church preached this terrible doctrine. In keeping with the tradition Saint Augustine once announced with ostentatious certainty that the floor of hell was "tessellated" with the bodies of unbaptized infants. Not long thereafter, two monks named Pelagius and Coelestius took issue with Augustine and argued against the doctrine of human depravity and the damnation of unbaptized infants. They were condemned for their efforts. (Par for the course of orthodoxy, it would appear.)

One can only wonder with speechless horror about the Christian mothers who lost unbaptized infants over those long and terrible centuries and who lived the rest of their lives in a worldly hell of torment believing as surely as they believed anything on earth that their babies were suffering torture beyond all description. Let the searing words of Saint Fulgentius delineate the true picture of this horror:

> Hold most firmly, and by no means doubt, that little children, whether they die before or after birth, pass, without the holy sacrament of baptism, from this world, to be punished with the everlasting punishment of eternal fire.

If any other religion on the face of the earth has ever embraced so inhumane a doctrine, I have been unable to unearth it.

Eventually the Church retracted this doctrine and declared that an invention of scholastic theologians called "limbo" or *limbus infantium,* would be the final resting place of unbaptized children. Limbo was supposed to lie

on the edge or confines of hell. In limbo, there would be no pain or suffering. On the other hand, the residents of limbo, not having that baptismal "character" imprint or indelible mark on the soul that made the recipient a member of Christ and of the Church, would never be able to bask in the personal glory of God—a form of punishment (albeit subtle) nonetheless, because of unearned guilt due to that Christian-Judaic-Orphic doctrine known as original sin.

Hell as a torture-chamber for particularly nasty and unregenerate sinners was unknown to primitive religions and to ancient Judaism. Regarding the invention of a *tormenting* hell, the horrors which the medieval Christian loved to depict were first devised by the Orphics. The tortures of hell were even necessary to the felicity of those spirits residing in heaven. As Gregory the Great argued, "The bliss of the elect in heaven would not be perfect unless they were able to look across the abyss and enjoy the agonies of their brethren in eternal fire."

Even Purgatory wasn't a Christian invention; the Greeks thought of it first. But the Christians made good use of that state or place of purification after death. To Roman Catholics, Purgatory became a stopover where the souls of persons who died in the grace and love of God, but who were still guilty of minor sins which didn't merit eternal damnation, could suffer some mild chastisement; afterwards, the souls would be received in heaven.

Quick to realize that the justice of God could be satisfied with a little earthly intervention, the Church soon devised a means of turning the purgation of impurities into a profitable adjunct to clerical benevolence. The buying of masses or special prayers for the purpose of mitigating, relieving or shortening the sufferings in Purgatory has long been a practice in the Catholic Church.

But back to the Didache. It was turned up in 1875 in Constantinople by some tourists, I think.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Septuagint

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.

(James 1:13.)

And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham.

(Genesis 22:1.)

On the far side of the alleged birth of Jesus called the Christ—about 280 B.C.—the *Septuagint,* or "Version of the 70," was begun by an aggregation of rabbis, 72 in all, translating independently for the purpose of turning out a miraculously inspired Greek version of the Old Testament. Legend has it that King Ptolemy II of Egypt, in response to a suggestion by Demetrius Phalareus, ordered each one of the writers to make, on his own, a full translation of the Old Testament in exactly 72 days, at the end of which time the 72 versions would be compared with the hope that they would all be exactly alike, showing therefore, God's approval or miraculous assistance in the project.

History doesn't record the immediate results of that ecstatic endeavor; but you can well imagine what happened. They wound up with 72 garbled and completely different versions of "Holy Writ"—a situation that must have driven the theological "powers that be" right up the walls as they tried to determine which rendition they should accept as being the most "miraculously inspired." In fact, it took over 250 years to decide on the winner (or the unluckiest version of them all). That translation was finally accepted near the beginning of the Christian era (so much for divine inspiration), and it differed from the Masoretic text chiefly in Samuel, Kings, Proverbs, and in Jeremiah, where it lacked about 2,700 words present in the Hebrew. The chronology founded upon the dates of the Septuagint adds up to about 1,500 years more from the creation to Abraham than the Hebrew Bible, and about 1,150 more than the Samaritan Pentateuch. The Septuagint is the version cited by Philo and Josephus, who seemed to feel that it merited some attention.

You may not give a tinker's damn, but E. Schurer says that the text of the Septuagint "has come down to us solely by the tradition of the Christian Church, with all the base corruption of the text."

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* candidly corroborates the testimony of Schurer with this analysis: "The Church had adopted the Septuagint as its own; this differed from the Hebrew not only by the addition of several books and passages but also by innumerable variations of text, due partly to the ordinary process of corruption in the transcription of ancient books, partly to the culpable temerity, as Origen called it, of correctors who used not a little freedom in making corrections, additions, and suppressions, partly to mistakes in translation, and finally in great part to the fact that the original Septuagint had been made from a Hebrew text quite different from that fixed at Jamnia as the one standard by the Jewish rabbis." (Divine inspiration, it seems, was conspicuous by its absence in *all* phases of this undertaking.)

In other words, the Christian Establishment adopted some version of the Septuagint (the work is also cited in the New Testament), only to junk it later. (Heaven only knows where it will turn up next.)

So there you have it: All you never wanted to know about the Septuagint, and then some.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A Polyglot Bible

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or is in the earth beneath.

(Exodus 20:4.)

Thou shalt make two cherubims of gold . . . And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another.

(Exodus 25:18–20.)

It was sometime in the 3rd century A.D. that Origines Adamantius—Origen, for short—composed his *Hexapla,* the first polyglot Bible. It contained, in six parallel columns, the Old Testament, Origen's Greek transliteration of same, the Septuagint, and three Greek translations by Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus. (But for mine own part, it's *all* Greek to me.)

Except for the compiler, this work is hardly worth mentioning. Origen, to be sure, is a most novel character. Origines Adamantius of Alexandria was born *circa* A.D. 185. He was considered to be one of the most learned of the Christian Founding Fathers. He held that the Scriptures have a three-fold meaning and are often to be interpreted allegorically, that the spirits of men were pre-existent and in that state fell from holiness, and that it is probable that all created beings including Satan will ultimately be saved. It was Origen who once asked: "What man of sense will suppose that the first and the second and the third day, and the evening and the morning, existed without a sun and moon and stars? Who is so foolish as to believe that God, like a husbandman, planted a garden of Eden?"

In other areas, Origen leaves much to be desired.

He was one of those crazy, mixed-up kids who took Jesus' words, ". . . and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake . . .," literally, if you know what I mean. I wouldn't hold it against him if it weren't for his mad, incessant railings against fornication. Sort of like a man on dry ground cursing the rest of us for being in the sink. Not altogether cricket, to say the least.

This curious remark attributed to Jesus in the Book of Matthew about eunuchs who have castrated themselves for the greater honor and glory of God deserves some consideration.

Just what was the Evangelist (or whoever) driving at when he put those words into the mouth of his favorite savior-god? And where did he get such an idea? Was he an ardent student of the mystery cults of his day and time? Was he influenced by the swinging votaries of Attis? Or by the worshipers of Phrygia? Or by the priests of Cybele who worked themselves into such a frenzy by getting roaring drunk and rushing around with knives unsheathed and genitals bared that they cut off their testicles and flung them to the image of their goddess? Those who lived after their orgy of religious exaltation adopted the dress of women. (The tonsure of the Catholic priest is a symbol of castration with his adoption of female clothes, in just the same way as the priests of Astarte, after castration, assumed female clothes. Smart boys. Symbolic castration is immeasurably better than the real thing, *n'est-ce pas?*)

And just why was Jesus the Christ, the Christian savior-god, supposed to be enchanted with that sort of thing? Or were the Evangelists just putting into the mouth of their Messiah what they thought any good, red-blooded savior-god ought to say?

Whatever the case may be, many of the early Christians soon became obsessed with castration—and not just the symbolic kind (the Christian philosopher Origen is the best known of the early castrates). Because of the unfortunate inclusion of that zealous appeal for eunuchs in the New Testament, thousands hastened to castrate themselves, an act made easy for them because of their belief that man had been created a pure being in the image of God and that he had been defiled by woman—Eve, that is, the BITCH OF EDEN, remember?—AND . . . because of the powerful ascetic impulse. Spiritual megalomania combined with egotism created the ascetic who felt that spiritual purity was worth the mortification of the flesh as expiation for sin and as visible token of utter devotion to God.

The flower of asceticism blossomed early in the Christian Church. The idea that "the fashion of this world passeth away, and life is not worth living," was nothing new. It had an ages-old hold upon the human species. Every famous teacher from Plato to John the Baptist, from Paul to Plotinus, axiomatically accepted asceticism as an essential of and qualification for religious life. To the ascetic, purification and detachment from things of sense were the ideals; and the true Christian ideal soon came to be represented by poverty, celibacy and retirement from the world. "For I desire to suffer," said Ignatius. "Suffer me to be eaten by the beasts, through whom I can attain to God." Modern psychologists see lasciviousness and asceticism springing up from the *same* soil. Religious emotions, they say, are often accompanied by waves of erotic sensation. It is not too surprising then to find the words, "My love is crucified," in the Epistles of Ignatius, along with the application of the erotic word *Eros* or darling to the believers of Christ.

In their attempts to profess divine philosophy, the ascetics grew their hair long, wore rags, abandoned the cities and fled to the deserts; they lived in caves or tiny huts; they fed meagerly on a vegetation diet; and they castigated themselves, vying with one another in an eager rivalry of self-mortification and self-torture that sometimes drove them mad. The more rigorous the ascetic, the more violently he abused his contemptible earthly body in the hopes of destroying it. The monk who fasted the longest, slept the

least, prayed the most, worked the hardest and endured the hottest of days and the coldest of nights was the greatest monk.

Macarius told of two monks who lived naked with the beasts for forty years. Others stood in the desert heat with stones attached to their testicles; when their manhood rotted and dropped off, they crawled away to sainthood, secure in the thought that they would earn the ultimate reward for their holy dedication. (Should the reader be interested, that's one way to become a saint.)

Believing with the Greek philosopher Athenagoras that demons "lusted after virgins and succumbed to flesh," the ascetics hated women. From Havelock Ellis, we have the psychoanalytic premise for this behavior: "The ascetics, those erratic and abnormal examples of the variational tendency . . . knew that every natural impulse of a woman is the condemnation of asceticism. All true lovers of the artificial and perverse find woman repulsive; 'Woman is natural,' it is written among the sayings of Baudelaire, 'that is to say abominable'."

To historian, W. E. H. Lecky, the ascetic was "A hideous, sordid, and emaciated maniac, without knowledge, without patriotism, without natural affection, passing his life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture, and quailing before the ghastly phantoms of his delirious brain . . ." (People like that today are often called "hippies.")

Many members of the Christian Establishment like to pretend that asceticism merely involves a "humble unselfish surrender to God." (I wouldn't go so far as to call this conclusion a monument to axegrinding parochialism; no matter how you slice it, though, baloney is still baloney.) The Catholic scholar Duchesne, on the other hand, is quite able to face the truth about asceticism without trying to cover it up. "The outskirts of towns," he writes, "became covered with hermitages, veritable dens, which gave shelter to two or three monks, sometimes only to one: in these they lived the life of savages, emaciated, unclean, in rags."

Regarding the subject of personal uncleanliness—which was considered to be a virtue, not only during the early years of the Christian movement but for centuries afterwards—the pertinent words of Saint Jerome are worth noting: "Does your skin roughen without baths? Who is once washed in the blood of Christ needs not wash again." To Jerome, the filthier a penitent was, the more beautiful he was. For an adult person to wash was a practice to be condemned, and he expressed his admiration for women who abstained altogether from ablutions.

In its first embraces with civilization, the Christian Church showed no interest in preserving—and, in point of fact, contributed much to undermine—the standards of cleanliness among the people. It's safe to assume that cleanliness had no part of Christianity until the end of what we term the Middle Ages. Remember Saint Agnes? She was canonized primarily for her refusal to bathe. It was said that Saint Anthony was never guilty of washing his feet. And then there was the blessed Saint Catherine of Siena. She repressed her bodily functions (withheld from the toilet, kids) *ad majorem dei gloriam*.

What can be said about the shocking extravagances of Christian asceticism? If they were not recorded by many truthful and respected historians,

the grotesque behavior of the ascetics would pass belief. In the least complex terms, asceticism involves a self-centered effort on the part of the individual to guarantee his own salvation while repudiating the duties and responsibilities of life.

Not unlike the members of other religions, devout Christians like to pretend that the fanatics within their own theological system—demented ascetics, Messianic maniacs, infant damnation freaks, inquisitors, witchburning sadists, blood-thirsty crusaders, *et al.*—have nothing to do with the *real* Christ and the *true* faith. Nothing could be more abjectly false. Christian fanaticism has always been directly rooted in the most basic and fundamental doctrines of the cult. The furious fear of and hatred for women that saturated the entire Christian Establishment, for instance, evolved out of the "betrayal in the garden" tale and that obscenely immoral Christianized doctrine known as "original sin." (Leave it to that ever-erupting volcano of comicality, Billy Graham, to give the concept of original sin a down-to-earth flavor. "Sin is a disease we all inherit from our parents," he proclaims. The area of absurdity too dense for Christian penetration has yet to be discovered, it seems.) As another example, the monstrous infant damnation dogma was motivated by an opportune blending of the Christian obsession with original sin and a superstitious belief in the "magical" properties of baptism. No amount of theological lying or apologetical doubletalk can whitewash these deeply rooted Christian horrors.

But to return to our quest . . .

Until the advent of man's greatest shackle-breaker, printing, the constituencies of the ancient biblical compilations heretofore mentioned—plus others, to be sure—were, in the main, severely limited, since they couldn't be circulated for upwards of 1000 years or more to come—a situation that would have been regarded in some circles as a good thing. For instance, Pope Innocent III once forbade laymen to *read* or even to *touch* the Bible.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Council of Nicaea

God sent his only begotten Son into the world.
(I John 4:9.)

The sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.
(Job 1:6.)

In Asia Minor along about A.D. 325, that "old-time religion's" joint chiefs of staff—loosely canopied with the title "the Universal Church"—congregated at Nicaea to notarize their doctrines. (That's when they drew lots, or flipped coins, or something, to determine what would be the official Word of God and what would not.)

The Council of Nicaea was convened by the emperor Constantine—the one who saw visions of crosses and maybe even pink elephants and things of the sort in the sky.

After much throwing about of brains, this high-level collision of divine minds produced the *Nicene Creed*—". . . an inseparable mass of interpenetrating contradictions," according to certain detractors (a charge that invariably receives a chilly reception from the Christian Establishment); and herewith set down for the careful evaluation of the patient and benevolent reader is an excerpt from said document:

> In one Lord, Jesus Christ, born of the Father, only-begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father, of one substance, not of like substance, that is, True God from the True God, Very God of Very God, born, not made—Homoousion, that is . . .

Or . . . that Christ was truly Yahweh, coequal and coeternal with the Father, separate and yet one, that is . . .

Later, at a different council, it was decided that Christ was also truly man . . .

Later still, it was affirmed that the two natures were indivisibly one . . .

And still later, it was declared that they were nevertheless perfectly distinct.

Or . . . that Christ was the supreme God and helpless infant, infinite and finite, almighty and weak, omniscient and ignorant, omnipresent and not omnipresent, at one and the same time.

Or . . . that Jesus was both "very God of very God," begotten, not made, and also truly man.

Let us pause for a moment to consider that curious word *begotten,* which can be loosely defined as producing as an effect or causing to exist.

Without realizing the true meaning of the word the Christians misappropriated it from the Old Testament, Psalms 2:7, "Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee," meaning *Israel,* the whole people, not a person, and used it in some actual sense of an individual Messiah being begotten by God the Father. (Be it noted that the book of Psalms is filled with ringing declarations of, by and for Israel. E.g., "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—meaning, "Why hast thou forsaken Israel?")

It is significant that believers in a deity utterly above such human methods of propagation (the Jews and later the Moslems) were repulsed by what they called the prurient blasphemy on which Christianity was founded. Aside from this harsh judgement, they were confounded by the belief. As God, the only begotten son of the Father, existed from all eternity, being co-eternal with his Father, he was begotten a *second* time when he was born of a virgin maiden. Only this time he was begotten by a Holy Spirit ("Now the birth of Jesus was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost . . .") instead of the Father. (In its early stages, the Holy Ghost was feminine and considered to be the mother of the gods. We know from Origen that in the lost gospel according to the Hebrews Jesus was made to speak of "my mother, the Holy Spirit.") In keeping with the savior-god legend, God could be the child of a human mother, but not of a human father. ("But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son . . . made of a woman.") But why, the perplexed critics seem to have wondered, couldn't the miracle have been achieved without the visit of the *male* angel Gabriel? And why was it necessary for the Holy Ghost to come upon a virgin bride like Jupiter upon Danae in a golden cloud?

It isn't too difficult to see then, why truly reverent believers in an all-perfect and powerful supreme spirit found the Christian doctrines of celestial impregnation and divine begetting both revolting and confusing.

To carry on with the who's who and the what's what in the heavenly hierarchy business, Clement held that Jesus was the Word (Logos) of God, spirit made flesh; Tertullian claimed that Jesus Christ was not a Tertium Quid; and by the time of the Council of Nicaea, Bishop Alexander was teaching that "God is always, the Son is always, and the Son is the unbegotten begotten." (In case you are wondering what that means, your guess is as good as mine.)

Apparently the Cappadocians hit upon the airtight formula, however. They declared that in God there is only one ousia, but there are three hypostases or prosopa. (Three hypostases are okay, I suppose, or even three prosopa; but I've always contended that more than *one* ousia was absolutely essential.)

By the way, whatever happened to the Cappadocians?

Simple, forceful Christians summed up the whole hugger-mugger in this manner, though: "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin that

we may be made the righteousness of God in him"—thereby enhancing the obscurity with another obscurity.

With regard to the high-domed Christian plotters who attended that venerable council in Asia Minor, it's worth observing that one of their contemporaries believed that most of them must have been playing hooky when God passed out the brains. Referring to the patriarchal members of the Council of Nicaea, Sabinus, Bishop of Heraclea, was prompted to remark that with the exception of the emperor himself and one other person the three hundred assembled bishops were "a set of illiterate simple creatures, who understood nothing."

Be that as it may very well have been, the Council of Nicaea was very important to the Christian cult. During that period of time and for at least a century and a half preceding it, the Church was involved in the canonization of her doctrines—a task the Christians found most difficult to achieve. (The English word "canonicity" is an anglicized derivative of the Greek term Kanon, meaning a "rod" or "ruler." A churchly canon then, embraces the general rule of moral and religious duty along with the sacred books and writings that could be called genuine or inspired.)

The taste of the period, it seems, contributed much to the determination of which books from the many Christian writings would be included or rejected in the Canon. And there was much uncertainty about exactly where to place certain writings. The Acts of the Apostles had not been accepted as late as the second half of the 2nd Christian century. Even as late as the 4th century seven pieces (Epistles to the Hebrews, Apocalypse of John and five Catholic Epistles) were not acknowledged as canonical by some congregations. The term "Catholic" was first used in the 2nd century. Near the end of the century the Church was calling itself the "Catholic Church"—meaning, the universal church.

During the canonizing of the collection of Christian writings, the Church assigned the works to writers whose names would confer authenticity on the selected books. Others were selected for canonization because they had been adopted for liturgical use by the most important churches. The first Gospel (Mark rather than Matthew), for instance, had gained authority in the Syrian congregation; Luke was popular in Greece proper and Rome (Mark also held forth in Greece and Rome); and John had taken root in the congregations of Asia. Not until the Council of Trent in 1546, however, was the Roman Catholic canon of the Old and New Testament finally fixed.

For reasons that may be readily perceivable to the more astute, the period following the Council of Nicaea subsequently became known as the "Dark Ages," during which time, *Homoousians* (of *one* substance) and *Homoiousians* (of *like* substance) slit each other's throats to prove that Christians will be Christians, and divers drawings and quarterings took place during the healthy maintenance of the faith. Oh yes, we musn't overlook the *Heterousians;* they were devout as hell, too; not to mention a few others scarcely worth mentioning.

One of the more notable achievements of the Dark Ages (often referred to by Christian propagandists as "the Happy Ages of Acquiescence") was the initiation of the "simple faithful" to several hundred years of intensely meaningful serfdom—an ecstatic historical interlude rife with tolerance. "Very

seldom was anyone roasted over a slow fire for less than two paragraphs of theological discourse," as someone once said. (But we won't go into that.)

Regarding the "simple faithful," a group made up mainly of peasants and serfs and creatures of that ilk, it's worth noting that the eminent Saint Thomas Aquinas once saw fit to declare that the ideal state should maintain a peasantry "strong in arm, dull in intellect, and divided among themselves by mutual distrust"—not the first time in history, I might add, that the common man has been relegated to insignificance by theological *fiat*.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Logos

Now, therefore, swear unto me here by God . . . And Abraham said, I will swear . . . There they sware (sic) *both of them.*

(Genesis 21:23, 24, 31.)

But I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth for it is his footstool.

(Matthew 5:34.)

In the preceding chapter a rather unique term—*Logos*—was used to describe the "spirit made flesh" concept of the Son of God; and we would be remiss if we continued without delving into the Logos concept of the Greeks—one of the more significant factors, according to certain scholars, that contributed to the development of Christianity. "For that age," writes Adolph Harnack, "the appropriate formula for uniting the Christian religion with Greek thought was the Logos."

But what exactly is the Logos?

Of all the incomprehensible mysteries that lurk within the Christian system, the Logos—an area of theology wherein the eschatology is Byzantine, the clouds of reasoning nebulous, and the confounding of clarity wondrous to behold—seems to be the most difficult to explain.

In the early church there was a conflict between two divergent points of view regarding the nature of Jesus. The Adoptionists claimed that he was a *mortal man who became a god*. Those who supported the Logos Christology regarded Jesus as the eternal Logos or a *pre-existent god who became a man*. The second group prevailed. Jesus was assimilated to the Greek Logos concept; and from that point on, the Christians identified the Logos with the Son of God.

BUT—and it is indeed a *big* "but"—they were faced with the task of reconciling the terms Son, Logos, and Spirit while attempting to explain at the same time the unique sense in which God was believed to be the Father of Jesus. Not only that, they were left with the confounding task of merely *defining* the Logos. But that, of course, was par for that particular course. To virtually everyone, it seems, Logos was an etymological blowfish lodged in the throat of comprehension. The results: no end of descriptions in mazy metaphors.

To some scholastic theologians, God, who was "the eternal mind," had the Logos within himself, "being from eternal instinct with Logos . . ."

Or . . . the Logos was "the image of God" upon which man was made; or, to think of it in the Platonic sense, it was "the archetypal idea."

Or . . . the Logos was a notion *related* to the Platonic idea, yet essentially *different*.

Or . . . the Logos was the pattern or model of the true, the beautiful, and the good in itself.

Or . . . the Logos was the notion of *Chokhmah,* as found in the biblical books of the Jews, of Wisdom, taken as the essence of the eternal ideals; or maybe it was Philo who merely substituted a new word, Logos, for the old word Wisdom.

Or . . . the Logos was the divine mind working in the universe, the great power serving God.

Other scholars found the doctrine of God as the Word of the Logos in numerous deep-seated creeds (religious or philosophical) in countries as diverse as China, India, Persia, Greece and ancient Egypt.

Consider the Stoic philosophy. With its belief in a God immanent in the universe, Stoicism could use Logos in the sense of the governing principle of the world. The Platonists, on the other hand, believing in a God entirely above all existence in the universe, could use Logos as a connecting link between God and the world.

But what did Logos denote to the early Christians? Reason? Or the rational principle of the universe? Or did it denote the "meaning" which a man has in his mind when he thinks or wills? Or did it merely denote the "word" in which this meaning is uttered? Or was it meant to be an alternative for the miraculous birth? Or was it the name for the second person of the Trinity considered as the expression or incarnation of the Divine Reason which could serve as the mediator between God and man?

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

"We worship and love the Word . . ." said Justin Martyr.

For Origen, Logos was the power of "Immaterial Reality" to reach out and mingle with material reality ("the world of matter").

"God having his Logos within, in his own bowels," declared Theophilus, "begat him, belching him forth along with his own Wisdom before all things." (Somehow, the thought of the Logos made flesh being belched forth from the bowels of God hardly provides the most charming picture of the Fathering of the pre-existent god who became a man.)

"Life and Light: that, precisely, is the Logos . . ." explains the 19th century French historian, Loisy.

> The Logos is on the bread . . . and the bread becomes the Light and the Life . . . and the cup is the blood of truth . . . the bread which God the Word declared to be His body . . . the Word that nourishes souls . . . Christians are in the body of Christ . . . as the bread is made of many grains . . . yet there is but one loaf . . . the body of the Logos.

Now that we have provided a crystal-clear analysis of that ever-plaguing

mysterium tremendum known as the Logos for the benefit of the eternally grateful reader, let us plunge onward and upward . . . or, wherever.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Apostles' Creed

He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

(Joel 2:13.)

God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.

(Nahum 1:2.)

Along about the 4th century A.D. the *Apostles' Creed,* a document that purportedly has its foundation in the last chapter of Matthew, appeared virtually out of nowhere.

The Apostles' Creed, considered by some to be the clearest expression of what was taught by the Apostles, asserts that Jesus is the Son, not of the previously unknown God, but of the God who is also the Creator . . . that he is born of woman . . . that he shares man's flesh . . . that he has a specific place in history, having been crucified and buried under an official Roman whose official name is known . . . that he is also fully human, even though he is the true Son of God . . . and that there is only *one* God, not *two* Gods, or *three* Gods, but *one* God with *three* heads—not *three* Gods with one head. (Getting all this, kids?)

This anomalous "three-headed chimaera," as Servetus described the phenomenon, brings us once again to one of those really *big* things in the Christian system and another one of the more incomprehensible mysteries within its articles of faith: the conception of a Triune God.

In essence, the mystery of the Logos leads directly into the mystery of the Trinity. It was the victory of the Logos Christologists over the Adoptionists that left a permanent mark on Christian theology in the "threeness" of the doctrine of God.

Most Christians have always regarded the Trinity doctrine as being typical of their faith: a theological component inherent in Christianity. The adoption of words, and even concepts, such as Savior, Epiphany, Baptism, Illumination, Mysteries, and Logos, and the forceful molding of these words and concepts to suit theological Dogma, has been a practice of the Church from early on. The assertions of Catholic apologists to the contrary notwithstanding, the Trinity—like virtually everything else in the faith—wasn't a Chris-

tian invention. For at least thirty centuries the Egyptians had been familiar with the conception of a Triune God. Although manifestly alien to Judaism, it was an idea common to numerous gentile religions.

Obviously, the ideas involving a divine trinity were far too widespread and deeply rooted in the beliefs of the time to be ignored by the rapidly developing Christian cult. Something more emotional and more familiar than strict monotheism was necessary. It wasn't difficult, therefore, to move from the old Trinity of Father, Mother and Child to a new Trinity. The Christians accepted the divinity of the Savior from the Gnostics. From that point, they couldn't avoid placing the God-Father alongside the Son, in the company of the Ghost (Holy Spirit) as the third divine being. Thus, the Church was compelled to offer a polytheistic religion to its followers.

Around the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity, the Church organized itself for a struggle that continued with varying degrees of ferocity for at least three centuries—the result finally being that the Son was considered to be of the same essence as the Father and the Divine Spirit of the Father, and equal to them.

Surprisingly, the New Testament was ignorant of the doctrine of the Trinity for a very long time. After the official recognition of polytheism by the Catholic Church, however, the Great Commission in Matthew (28:19) was eventually changed to read as follows: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost . . ." And somewhere along the way, a passage declaring without question or qualification that the three divine entities were of "one" substance ("For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one . . .") was added to the book of John; but it was omitted from the Revised Version (1881) after it was demonstrated to be a forgery.

Turning once again to the Apostles' Creed, I hate like hell to inject a sour note into the discussion, but some busybody named Lorenzo Valla proved once upon a time that said Creed was a forgery because it very obviously postdated the Apostles by several centuries. (Cool heads can always be found to shatter bubbles, it seems.)

Should Lorenzo Valla be correct it might pay to speculate for a moment on the forger's source of inspiration. Interestingly enough, a rather simple test will serve to point the finger of suspicion in the most logical direction. If you substitute the name of Dionysus or Krishna or Hercules or Osiris or Attis for the name of Jesus, and instead of Mary insert the name of Semele or Devaki or Alcmene or Neith or Nana, and for Pontius Pilate use the name of any terrestrial tyrant who comes into the corresponding story, you will have a *creed* that fits in all particulars into the rites and worship of a pagan god. (Just a little something for you to put in your pipe and smoke.)

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Saint Jerome Latin Vulgate

He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgement: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

(Deuteronomy 32:4.)

He that believeth not shall be damned.

(Mark 16:16.)

Near the end of the 4th century, Eusebius Hieronymus translated the Old Testament from the hybridized Jewish language into Latin. That work became known as the Saint Jerome Latin Vulgate; and a momentous achievement it was, indeed. Imagine having to fashion something out of all those consonants—and in Latin, yet.

The Bible as a whole was known to the Middle Ages in the Western Church through the Vulgate. It became known as the Vulgate (meaning "common") because of its common use in the Latin Church. The Old Testament was translated mostly from Hebrew and Aramaic, with conformity to the Septuagint, and the New Testament revised from older Latin versions with the aid of Greek manuscripts.

Many other Latin versions were subsequently produced and they all differed greatly one from the other. Jerome's Latin was nearest to that of the Italian family of Old Latin versions, which was a revision of the European family, which in turn was an independent version from, or an early revision of, the African family, believed by many to include the oldest Latin versions. (Sounds like a polyglot's nightmare.)

Aside from these Latin versions, Egyptian, Ethiopic, Armenian and all sorts of other Bibles were produced; and naturally, everyone saw fit to question the validity of everyone's Bible but his own—a situation leading to endless miscellaneous blood spilling, and an offering of further proof that Christians will be Christians.

Regarding some of the more questionable theological practices of the time, Bishop Ulrich of Augsburg once opted to offer the rather titillating suggestion that "the breasts of Holy Writ" should not be pressed too hard, "lest they yield blood rather than milk." (He was so hip.)

From that point on, things got thicker and thicker until the 9th century when Pope Nicholas I and a flake named Photius excommunicated each other over *filioque,* meaning "and from the son"—the whole idea being to

determine whether the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father *or* from the Son, or from the Father *and* the Son, or possibly from something else or other.

It seems that Pope Nick was in favor of furthering confusion by adding "filioque" to the Nicene Creed directly following "and in the Holy Ghost—who proceeds from the Father"; whilst old Photius was in favor of preserving the status quo. (On second thought, maybe Nicholas was the flake.)

So there they were, "The Holy Orthodox Catholic *And* Apostolic Roman Church" versus "The Holy Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Roman Church"—a pretty kettle of fish, indeed (not an altogether irrelevant analogy considering that the fish was a regular symbol of Christ to the early Christians; that Joshua, the first savior of Israel, was called "the son of Nun," that is to say, "the son of the fish"; and that Tertullian described Christians as, "we little fishes followers of our Fish, Jesus Christ . . ."). Whereupon, Saint Agobard, the Bishop of Lyon, was moved to comment about the slippery words and viscous thought of the framers of orthodoxy. "If you once begin such a system," he lamented, "who can measure the absurdity which will follow." (If you begin badly, in other words, your ending may be even worse.)

Just about the lowest possible opinion imaginable regarding Churchly Councils and Synods is held by numerous scholars, and even by some eminent theologians. "Nowhere is Christianity less attractive than in the Councils of the Church," writes Milman. And from Saint Gregory we have this testimony: "I never knew of a Synod that did any good or prevented any evil."

Question by Voltaire: "When two councils anathematize each other, as has often happened, which of them is infallible?"

Incidentally, we are indebted to Photius for almost all we possess of Ctesias, Memnon, and Conon; which is something, I suppose.

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Age of Singular Sweetness

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

(Psalms 46:1.)

My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me . . .

(Psalms 22:1.)

A period following not long after the "filioque" dissension, and beginning at approximately A.D. 1137, subsequently became known as the "Middle Ages"—during which time, seven grand, murderous Crusades, and numerous piddling, murderous Crusades were generated to prove that Christians will be Christians; and divers burnings with faggots took place during the healthy maintenance of the faith.

Curiously, there are those who have enjoyed the fruits of the 20th century who are less than enthusiastic about our age, and who long for the "good old days" of the Middle Ages.

The well-known psychologist, sociologist, author, and devout socialist, Erich Fromm, is a good example of the kind of people I mean.

Man is the "freak of the universe" because he is equipped with self-awareness, reason and imagination, says Fromm. Because of these very attributes, however, he has been deprived of "paradise" since he is now estranged from nature. Man's separate, disunited existence is an unbearable prison in which he contrives to build social institutions, cultures, religions and philosophies to help him escape from the terrifying sense of helplessness and aloneness to which his reason condemns him.

And there's the rub.

When we blundered out of the Middle Ages and became capitalistic and industriously self-sufficient—even though we were liberated from the chains of ecclesiastical, economic and social tyranny—we were soon to discover the unhappy fact that we had created a chaotic world of insecurity, powerlessness, doubt, aloneness and anxiety.

But all is not lost.

There is an answer for the doomed creatures of this planet if we will but pause to consider it. Human socialistic "togetherness" will provide the only satisfactory solution to the problem of human existence just as it did in the past. A positive relationship suffused with the care and responsibility that

each human being feels for the others in the society can provide the kind of nearly mystical union needed to eliminate *alienated aloneness*. (Pay attention, kids. I'm going to ask questions.)

Now, horror of horrors, man has to assume total responsibility for his own survival; he has to produce and to trade; he has to think and to judge; his sense of identity can't be *inherited,* it has to be *achieved;* hence, our terrifying problems of isolation and separateness.

True, we gained certain freedoms and certain material advantages; BUT . . . a *sane* society must have more to offer than *just* political freedom and material well-being. (Now there's a *bon mot* worth noting.) Back in the Middle Ages, you see, a man had the opportunity to express the "full richness" of his personality because he didn't have to invent and compete, he had only to submit and obey. (*Does the silliness of socialists know no bounds?*)

Fromm isn't alone when it comes to harboring the belief that man has moved too far out of his "natural" element. According to a Sacramento State College clinical psychologist, it would be better if evolution would do a U-turn and develop human beings with brains more like man's ancestors.

"The future may belong to thalamic man," claims Doctor Arthur Burton.

What we really need, it seems, are underdeveloped brains, because man's overdeveloped cerebral cortex is interfering with his adaptation to his environment. (I've always wondered what the headshrinkers have been up to. Now I know. They are busy trying to underdevelop our brains. For very apparent reasons, some of us don't need psychiatrists.)

Obviously then, a healthy approach to the solution to many of our problems lies in the frank realization that we should return to the palmy days of the Middle Ages—that "Age of Singular Sweetness," according to an eloquent spokesman for the Christian Establishment—those glorious ages when there was complete lack of control over any aspect of one's existence because of the ruthless suppression of intellectual freedom, the paralyzing restrictions on any form of individual initiative and independence, not to mention the famines, the plagues, the exhausting labor from sunrise to sunset, the suffocating routine, the superstitious terrors, the attacks of mass hysteria afflicting entire towns, the nightmare brutality of men's dealings with one another, the use of legalized torture as a normal way of life . . .

When Force and the sword were the chief arbiters of justice rather than the law-courts . . . when all civil rulers were forced to swear an oath that they would destroy heretics to the full extent of their power . . . when the ordinary, everyday expedients of the criminal jurist were the caldron of burning oil, the wheel, burning or flaying or burying alive, tearing apart with wild horses, and the like (it was not uncommon for the victim to be snatched from the flames after being thoroughly seared, left to suffer with his burns and then be returned to the flames) . . .

When the Roman Church was a governor, a landed proprietor, a rent collector, an imposer of taxes, a material producer, an employer of labor on an enormous scale, a merchantman, a tradesman, a banker and mortgage-broker, a custodian of morals, a maker of sumptuary laws, a schoolmaster, a compeller of conscience—all in one . . . when the medieval dogmatic faith regarded the emotional impulses involving love and affection between one human being and another as distracting, if not wicked . . .

When all diseases of Christians were ascribed to demons, with the imps from hell concentrating their heaviest artillery on fresh-baptized Christians and newborn infants . . . when the sinner's soul was at the mercy of a "lugubrious phantasmagoria of devils" . . . when certain devotees of righteousness had estimated that there were just 7,405,926 devils divided into companies, each under a captain . . . when the society oscillated between puerile credulity and childish indifference or petulance . . .

When the science of medicine was considered to be a revolt against God . . . when self-mortification, squalor and physical uncleanliness were esteemed Christian virtues . . . when ignorance was considered to be the mother of devotion . . . when urine was the aspirin of the day (it was particularly recommended for use as a mouthwash in case of toothache; and when Cardinal Richelieu was on his deathbed a female charlatan prescribed for him a mixture of horse dung in white wine: the Cardinal drank it) . . . when every discovery of science, every invention of material benefit to man, was believed to have been secured with the Devil's help . . .

When the Christian Establishment had become a vast cult of relics and holy places, martyrs and sacred symbols . . . when monasteries were buying milk purporting to come from the breasts of the Blessed Virgin . . . when there were twelve holy prepuces of Jesus in European churches, with the one in the Abbey Church of Coulombs believed to possess the miraculous power of rendering all sterile women fruitful . . .

When the Jewish Bible gave to Christians their sanction for every form of cruelty: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." "And if a man take a wife and her mother it is wickedness; they shall be burnt with fire . . . And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore . . . shall be burnt with fire . . ." "Compel them to enter in to religious persecution!" argued that eminent biblicist Saint Augustine; and his writings became one of the great sources of justification for intolerance in the Christian-Judaic system.

The Middle Ages, a "perpetual spiritualistic nightmare" well symbolized in the two popes with whom they began and ended—Innocent III and that pinchbeck Innocent, Boniface VIII who, in the popular phrase of the time, "came in like a fox, ruled like a lion, and died like a dog." (O'Brien's *Economic Effects of the Reformation* tells us that the Middle Ages witnessed "the building up of a beautiful and harmonious civilization"—obviously a product of the reading back of modern conditions into ancient times.)

And what of that enviable "spirit of Chivalry" of the time that has been praised and exaggerated in *Ivanhoe* and *Camelot* and numerous other simplistic and artificial portraits? According to the poems and romances of that era, the first thought of every knight on finding a lady unprotected and alone involved the satisfaction of his sexual needs rather than the protection of her virtue. "Each is boldest in the banquet hall," chided John of Salisbury, "but in battle, every one desires to do the least . . ." (Good heavens, is nothing sacred anymore?)

"We may be certain not one of those knights, those fair and ethereal ladies, the Percivals, Tristrams, Iseults, ever washed," charges that lofty-minded historian Jules Michelet in something of a picky mood. "Hence, the furious itches that tortured our 13th century ancestors . . . terrible and cruel

ills . . . womankind were stricken with detestable eruptions that were looked upon as the visible sign of sin or a direct punishment from God." (Not the Camelot we learn about in school, is it kids?)

And what of the females of the age? What was their lot during this time of singularly theological sweetness?

Christian Establishmentarians like Billy Graham are fond of telling us how grand it was for women in the Christian-Judaic system, and how much they contributed to the development of the Church. "What would be the status of women today," ask apologetic biblicists, "were it not for the Bible? Enlightened concepts of the preeminence of conscience, ethics of race relations, the joy of sex, the sanctity of marriage and the family relationship—these and more we owe to the Bible."

Scholars laboring above and beyond the bounds of the Churchly curtain, however, are less than enthusiastic about the life and times of Christian females.

We have already seen how the early Fathers of the Church—among them, Saint John Chrysostom, Tertullian, Clement, Cyprian and Augustine—were repulsed by the thought of anything feminine, and believed women to be at best a "necessary evil."

By the time the 8th century rolled around the Church began to develop a series of "penitential books." The purpose of the penitentials was to explore the subject of sex, enumerate the misdeeds, and prescribe penalties for sexual sins. (To the Founding Fathers of the Church, sexual relations were the most shameful activities of men, with sexual guilt pertaining especially to women since they tempted men who would otherwise remain pure. Because of this belief, virginity was considered as high above marriage as the heavens were above the earth. Ambrose said that the race should die rather than that it be propagated with the sin of sexual intercourse. To Justin, sexual activity was unnecessary to life. Augustine asserted that virginity was a better state than marriage. Celibacy should be chosen even though the human race should perish, said Cyprian. And Saint Jerome tolerated marriage simply because it provided the world with virgins.)

The framers of the penitential books were a bit more realistic than the Church Fathers cited above, however. Although they urged chastity as a glorious ideal, they knew they couldn't totally ban sexual activities from the human calendar. Instead, they set out to severely limit the conditions under which the acts would be performed. They placed an absolute ban on all forms of sexual activity other than intercourse between married persons. Not only was the sexual act taboo, but kissing, sexual thoughts of any kind, any attempt to fornicate, and even wet dreams were made a crime. A great deal of space was devoted to homosexuality and sexual intimacy with animals; but the greatest stress of all was laid on masturbation. According to Aquinas, it was a greater sin than fornication. In addition, the days of the year on which the sexual act could be performed were limited: no Sundays, Wednesdays or Fridays, and forty days before Easter and forty days before Christmas were out.

By the time of the Middle Ages—when the principle of magical contamination had crept into the condemnation of women—the era was evolving, as many scholars see it, into the "most unfortunate period in the history of

womankind." The conventional medieval contempt for women regarded them as one of the lower orders of creation. Women were naturally inferior because they had been fashioned from the lowly rib. Had God intended them to be equal to man He would have made them from man's head instead. The Monk would bend his knee to the Virgin, but deep inside he knew that woman was the gross betrayer, the despoiler of purity; and whatever place she had in the natural order of things, man should try to avoid that place like a plague. As explained by Sprenger, the most notorious of the fanatical witch-burners, *Fe-mina* came from *fe* and *minus,* because a woman has *less faith* than a man.

No one today can imagine the incredibly hard life of the medieval woman who lived in dank, windy, weather-beaten castles, filled with cavernous halls barely lighted by tiny loopholes, frigid in winter, stifling in summer, unsanitary and nearly intolerable for habitation, the entrances and sleeping apartments filled with armed men. Under these conditions, even ladies of highest rank were not always safe. Wife-beating was common and fully recognized by law. The Council of Toledo (A.D. 400) had decreed that "if the wives of any clergy sinned" the husbands should "keep them bound in their house, compelling them to salutary fasting" and "macerating them with stripes and hunger."

Among the Hebrews, women along with slaves and idiots were listed with those who could not give evidence. The Christian Church, taking over this attitude, never assigned any ecclesiastical functions to women, as they were deemed in every respect inferior to men. Being a doorkeeper or a messagewoman was acceptable for a time, but even these functions were taken away from her during the Middle Ages. Jules Michelet, the author of a classical study in medieval superstition, argues that women surrendered themselves to Satanism during those terrible centuries for the simple reason that Satan elevated them above the position assigned to them by the Church. "The Church keeps her down at the lowest level of degradation," he charged. "She is Eve, and sin incarnate. In the house she is beaten . . . At bottom she is nothing . . . This is the horror of the Middle Ages."

If life was a perpetual nightmare for women above the rank of serf, it was a hell beyond all comprehension for the peasant woman. Like her husband, she was bound by law to the soil. From dawn to dusk she knew only the hardest labor. She could be bought and sold or given away or flogged or killed. Even her children were not her own. She lived in a filthy, chimneyless, single room, with bare-earth floor, and she slept on a hard mat crawling with lice. Fever and plague stricken, dying slowly of want and filth and wretchedness, she labored in a world of droughts, scarcities, famines, crime, violence, scurvy, leprosy, typhoid diseases, wars and pestilences. If half of her children survived infancy, she was lucky.

Throughout the Christian era women have paid heavily in the coin of pain, blood and death. Because Genesis 3:16 says of women, "in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children," pain was ordained in childbirth, and Christians taught that the prevention of pain during birth "was contrary to religion and the express command of Scripture." Even after the invention of anesthesia in the 19th century, the female had to suffer this pain. As late as 1921 religious zealots were still claiming that "the very suffering which a woman

undergoes in labor is one of the strongest elements in the love she bears for her offspring."

Only a few voices have been raised in defense of women. With the Bible in mind Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote: "I know of no other books that so fully teach the subjection and degradation of women." Said Helen Gardner: "Every injustice that has ever been fastened upon women in a Christian country has been 'authorized by the Bible' and riveted and perpetuated by the pulpit." And from Moncure D. Conway we have this powerful indictment: "There is not a more cruel chapter in history than that which records the arrest by Christianity of the natural growth to European civilization regarding women . . . the tremendous wrong that Christianity did."

The apologists for the Middle Ages are many, as we have noted. On the one side of the ledger we have the comments of that ardent medievalist, Erich Fromm. There is little doubt, I'm sure, that the late Fromm and many of his ivory-tower friends would have just adored living in a cozy, alienation-proof society like the Middle Ages. (People like that are often called intellectuals.) The most eminent historians, however, are on the other side of the controversy. The scholar Coulton has proved conclusively that Catholic historians have deliberately distorted or suppressed some of the facts about the era. In the *Catholic Encyclopedia,* for instance, we read that "The wonderful efficacy displayed by the religion of Christ in purifying the morals of Europe has no parallel." But J. M. Robertson, among other historians, isn't impressed. He counters with the charge that it wasn't Christianity that civilized Europe, but Europe—the complex of political and cultural forces—that civilized Christianity.

Even within the Churchly sphere some can be found who have been less than enchanted with "the Glorious Ages of Faith"—as the period has been described by certain zealous medievalists. With these words the famous Cardinal Newman admitted that historians were slanting their coverage of the era: "Unless one doctors all one's facts one should be thought a bad Catholic . . ." (In or out of the church, historians have always made good livings doing that sort of thing—i.e., revising history to satisfy the predilections of the day and the establishmentarians of the time.)

The 13th century monk Bernard, said to be the greatest monk of his era, was bearish on the established Church because of what he called the "foul rottenness that crawled through it." He described the cardinals as being "full of avarice and evil living; without faith or religion they sell God and his Mother and betray us and their fathers." Even Pope Innocent III condemned the clergy for being the chief source of the corruption of the people thus motivating what he believed to be "the evils of Christendom."

But the Middle Ages weren't all bad—if you can believe it! It was a time that saw most of the great cathedrals built; a time that gave new impetus to learning; a time that laid the foundations of our modern universities.

Incidentally, the Gothic art of the age wasn't appreciated by some of the more profound thinkers of the Western world—Racine, Moliere, Goethe, Voltaire and others. They denounced it as barbarous, among other things. In a sense, they weren't too far off the track. The walls, portals and capitals of the great cathedrals mirrored the thoughts and beliefs of numerous generations dating back to the days of the Romans, the Ionics, and the Byzan-

tines. In other words, the art of the Middle Ages was collectivistic; like so much of Christianity it owed its origins to non-Christian (but not necessarily non-white) sources.

And let us not lose sight of the supreme effort which the great monuments of the age cost—an effort that fell almost solely on the suffering serf and peasant. Peter Cantor writes that they were "built out of exactions on the poor, out of the unhallowed gains of usury, and out of the lies and deceits of the *quaestuarii* or pardoners . . ." As for the manual laborers, they were under a discipline comparable to that of an army with many of them actually conscripted into service.

In the main, the record of this one period of the past that we have been examining has been so dismal, some scholars have wondered whether or not there may be some general conclusion or, if possible, some lesson of hope or encouragement that might be drawn from such a "melancholy record of human error and folly." At least one great scholar, Henry Osborn Taylor, has been able to answer "yes" to that question: "Men had new thoughts," he writes, "the power of the popes was shattered . . . Wycliffe had risen; Huss and Luther were close to the horizon; a new science of observation was stirring, and a new humanism was abroad . . ."

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Tyndale and Wycliffe

The Lord is upright, and there is no unrighteouness in him.

(Psalms 92:15.)

For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.

(Matthew 13:12.)

Once upon a time, an angry controversy raged over the beginnings of the all-important English Bible. There were those who argued that the history of the English Bible began with the work of Tyndale; while others declared just as heatedly that Wycliffe was the culprit.

Actually, Wycliffe was born one hundred years earlier than Tyndale, and his *Early Version* was in the making some 130 years before the first English Bible was printed—an observation that should have indicated something significant to the Tyndalites.

But it all really began way back in the shady ages when nearly everyone was a pagan except the Christians. (A situation that still prevails.)

Sometime in the 7th century A.D., a biblical translation was underway in the little Yorkshire hamlet of Streonshalh.

By the time the 8th century dawned clear and bright, Alfred, the Venerable Bede, and others, were busily translating like crazy into simple, forceful Anglo-Saxon; e.g.: "Ne lige thu dearnunga"—which has something to do with adultery for some reason.

Barely a few hundred years later, Johannes Gutenberg printed his name into earthly immortality with the invention of movable type, thereby putting himself on a historical par with the inventors of the wheel and the arch, and then the biblical game really took off. Which brings us to the *Great Translations* and those intrepid progressives Tyndale and Wycliffe.

The first complete translation into English was made from the Vulgate by Wycliffe about 1382 (at least 65 years before the first demonstration of the Gutenberg method of printing), and revised by John Purvey about 1388. Along about 1525, Tyndale founded his version of the New Testament, the Pentateuch and other parts of the Old Testament. Miles Coverdale, who may have been one of Tyndale's assistants, published the first complete English Bible in 1535.

Tyndale was burned for tampering—with Holy Writ, that is. He had a knack for saying the wrong things, anyway; things like: "The Pope's Bull slayeth more than Aaron's calf." (One doesn't win friends and converts easily with an attitude like that.) As for Coverdale, he barely escaped with his life for his arrogant and obnoxious fiddling around with the Scriptures. They got even with Wycliffe, too. That one had industriously earned the title "Arch Heretike" for translating the Bible into the "Englische tong," thus "hurling the pearl of the Gospel under the feet of swine"—as the intractable Roman Church declared with its usual expressive appreciation of the masses.

So, in the year of Our Lord (that strange one who said, "I come not to send peace but the sword!" . . . or was it, "Damn the unbelievers, full speed ahead!"), 1428, Pope Martin V commanded that Wycliffe's bones be dug up and burnt. A certain Bishop Fleming gleefully saw to the business at hand; at which time, one was wont to remark, "Poor Wycliffe." (Wycliffe was known for having his name spelled 28 ways. That apparently didn't help.)

A moment for John Huss, a Bohemian reformer who held certain views at variance with those held by the established Church. Not that it matters a whole hell of a lot now, but Huss taught the doctrines of Wycliffe (trivia buffs should be thrilled to learn this)—"except upon the Eucharist, whereon he was orthodox." For being an intransigent Wycliffite, he was adjudged a heretic by the Council of Constance and burnt alive in 1415.

Due to the miracle of printing, the following centuries were literally flooded with Scripture. Luther's, the Dort, King James, Genevan, French, Danish and Swedish, are only a few of the Bibles that virtually erupted on the right and on the left, both in jolly olde Englande and in crusty old Europe.

Concerning English Bibles, one of the earlier and more intriguing scriptural renditions was engineered by an eager beaver named Whittingham who must have been peculiarly inspired by the book of Genesis, for he penned that "Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves together and made themselves breeches." That issue became jocularly known as the "The Breeches Bible," and didn't last for reasons that should be apparent to almost anybody. (I'll bet Whittingham really thought he had something, too.)

The picturesque comicality of "The Placemaker's Bible" was demonstrated by the following reading in Matthew: "Blessed are the placemakers." And then there was the "The Bug Bible," which contained the passage, "So that thou shalt not need to be afraid for any bugges in the night." "The Chained Bible" derived its name from the fact that, in churches, it was often chained for public reading.

And finally, at least two Bibles—of the heaven alone knows how many others there were—are worth mentioning: "The Thumb Bible," which was about the size of a thumb, one inch square and half an inch thick; and "The Treacle Bible"—thus named because the revisionists were foolhardy enough to ask, "Is there no treacle in Gilead?" (I don't know; is there?)

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Luther and Calvin

Though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.
(I Corinthians 3:2)

If any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.
(Galatians 1:9.)

Late in the winter of the 15th century, that man Martin Luther happened. You know who I mean. He is the one who enriched our literary heritage with the statement, "Reason is the devil's harlot." Luther is more than famous for having created a fracas that later became known as the Reformation.

Nothing much came of it but Protestantism. ("Say what you will, Protestantism is a petty affair." "Catholic World," September, 1871. And who am I to quibble with "Catholic World"?)

Not that the Protestant revolt was a complete washout. Protestantism was a rebellion against an established authority—the totalitarianism of the Roman Church. It was an attack on established institutions, and it professed to side with individual freedom and democratic self-rule. It aimed to help individual initiative and break down the medieval feudal nexus in politics and the stranglehold of the Church on virtually every area of life.

"For Rome is the greatest thief and robber that has ever appeared on earth, or ever will . . ." thundered Martin Luther. "Poor Germans that we are . . . we have been compelled to bow the head beneath the yoke of our tyrants . . ." And he appealed to the Teutonic people to throw off that yoke.

And when they did exactly that, he provided them with the Lutheran Church—a church with its own laws, dogmas, bishops, priests and its own professed doctrine of good intentions. Typically, Luther, as a rebel against authority, ended up by creating his own authoritarian regime. The early Protestants neither preached nor practiced religious toleration; the outcome: they became as adept in the art of persecution as the authority they had challenged. ('Twas most likely ever thus within the convoluted and complex world of canonical absolutism known as orthodox religion.)

Another thing: Martin Luther formally enlisted God on the side of the State. Since governments are the creations of divine power, he preached, we, the wicked masses, stained as we are with original sin, must bear un-

protestingly whatever the government chooses to do. (Sounds rather a lot like a liberal democrat, doesn't he?)

Nonetheless, Luther was the greatest single influence on the development of the German religion, no doubt about that. He translated the Bible into German in the 16th century, along with various and sundry unavoidable alterations and deletions, apparently, whilst the Roman Church really split its sixes and sevens and had lots more to say about pearls and swine—which got them nowhere. Luther's translation of the New Testament appeared in September 1522 at Wittenberg, Germany, without any date or name of the publisher on its title-page. It became known as the *Septemberbibel*. His translation of the Old Testament was completed in 1534. The last I heard, it was on display at Worms.

It's surprising that Martin Luther lived to die in bed, since the mouthings of this pillar of orthodoxy scarcely knew any bounds: "As well as an ass's head is suited to a human body, so well is the Pope suited to the head over the Church."

Which reminds me, a certain popular radio and TV performing Catholic Bishop of a few years back—who enjoyed telling us that he "traveled with angels" when he flew TWA (for which he got a free ride, you can bet your bottom ducat)—was once known to declare with some intensity that we are living at the end of an era "ushered in by the Protestant revolt 400 years ago—a revolt that denied Authority, so that as a result, we have been living without God." (Well, he had to blame everything on something.)

Not surprisingly, the Roman Church is still sniping at the Lutheran revolt. As late as October 1975, Pope Paul VI condemned the Reformation of Martin Luther's time for having worked against European unity. Before Luther's revolt against the papacy, he stated, attempts at uniting Europe politically had "known their time of glory." But the Reformation, the Pope continued, "contributed to a dispersion."

The Pope very carefully avoided any reference to the Eastern schism, by the way, which split Eastern and Western Europe 500 years before Luther's time in a clash over the papacy's claim to spiritual sovereignty—a conflict that could scarcely be called anything less than a "dispersion."

The Pope also criticized doctrinal "pluralism" or diversity in the Catholic Church. He called it the cause of "ambiguity and equivocation." Lamenting the unhappy drift toward "free examination"—which, he charged, "often undermines and annuls the objective and unequivocal unity of the doctrine of faith"—he called upon Catholics to strive above all "to maintain unity in their own church." (Any toleration of "free examination" within the Roman Establishment is not to be tolerated, in other words.)

But back to Martin Luther.

In some ways, he was Teutonic through and through; in other ways, though, he seemed to be out of sync with Germanism. He was excitable, inconsistent and undisciplined—something of the proverbial bull in a china shop, at times. All of his critics to the contrary notwithstanding, however, Luther wasn't the worst of the worse. He was consistent in at least one respect, you can say that about him. Because he considered reason to be satanically inspired, he avoided it like the plague.

And then there was John Calvin.

Calvin reigned with absolute authority as a high-domed, theological establishmentarian in some area of the world or other for at least thirty years; and he is still esteemed in Scotland, Holland and Massachusetts. As for the more enlightened areas of the world, he is remembered—more than for anything else—for having murdered an enterprising sort of a chap named Servetus.

Trained for the Church, Miguel Serveto, a Spaniard, soon found himself at odds with the celibate and cloistered life. On top of that, he made the mistake of accepting a position as a private secretary to no less a person than Quiritana, who happened to be the confessor to the Emperor Charles V. In his secretarial capacity, Servetus was present at the Emperor's coronation at Bologna. There he saw the Pope borne aloft, with the mob kneeling in the dust adoring him and scrambling to kiss his shoes, and even the Emperor himself, with his whole army abasing themselves before his Holiness.

To the newly independent-minded Servetus, the sight was nauseating and repulsive, with the pomp, power, tyranny and greed of the representatives of the church striking him as being wholly out of step with the humble life and simple morality depicted in the Gospels.

As a result, he freely expressed his unhappiness with both the Reformation of Luther and the Roman Church. Eventually he published a book entitled *Christianity Restored*.

In this work, he lashed both the Papacy and the Reformers, he ridiculed the Trinity as a "three-headed chimaera," he rejected the horrible doctrine that all infants who died unbaptized were consigned to hell, he proclaimed Jesus to be a naturally begotten man, and he proposed a Christianity that he believed to be more fit for reasonable and humane men.

A copy of this work fell into the hands of John Calvin, who devoutly believed that the Scripture writers were "sure and authentic amanuenses of the Holy Spirit." With help of the Inquisition, Calvin captured Servetus and condemned him to be burnt at the stake for having published the book. And Calvin saw to it personally that the nasty heretic got his just deserts. According to his orders, the wood that was heaped around Servetus was purposely green so the death would be deliberately and painfully slow.

John Calvin was French, not Dutch, by the way—which doesn't prove a great deal other than making the points that Frenchness can be identified with Protestantism, and that Frenchmen make as good (or as zealous) Puritans as any others. Calvin was logical and systematic, a rigid determinist with an icy cold center. His main trouble was his excessive pessimisim about man's ability to lead the good life in this world—hardly the most attractive attribute for one dedicated to prying humanity loose from Catholic "superstition." Beyond that, the best that can be said about Calvin is that he was a pallid, hollow-eyed chap of middle stature—and a real thimblerigger, in my book. (Well, maybe nobody loved him.)

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

King James

For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without the law.

(Romans 2:12)

For where no law is, there is no transgression.

(Romans 4:15.)

Herewith included, for the careful consideration of the attentive reader, is a sample of some of the snappy biblical cacography with which they had to put up in the Middle Ages:

> And he saf summe sotheli apostlis, summe forsothe prophetis, othere forsothe euangelistis, othere forsothe schepherdis and techeris—
>
> to the ful endynge of seyntis, into the work of mynisterie, into edificacioun of Cristis body,
>
> till we rennen alle, invnyte of feith and of knowynge of Godde's sone, into a parfyt man, into the mesure of age of the plente of Crist:
>
> that we ben not now litile children, mouynge as wawis, and be borun aboute with al wynd of techinge, in the weywardnesse of men, in sutil witt, to the disceyuynge of errour.

It was Scripture like this that led that majestic Defender of the Faith, King James I, to the conclusion that if they had to have a *biblia,* at the very least, it ought to be able to stand the gaff with a mentality above the level of a six-year-old; so he authorized four and fifty mental heavyweights to clear away some of the debris and to add a little literary flesh to the biblical bones. It took them "the paines of twise seuen times seuentie two days"—give or take the paines of a day or two—to "hammer it on their anvil."

Their work was based upon a revision of "The Bishop's Bible" (1568), which was a revision of "The Matthew's Bible" (1537), which was a combination of the Tyndale and Coverdale efforts. Also liberally sprinkled in—more for the worse than for the better—were the contents of a Greek text which had been collected and edited by Erasmus (1516), who had in turn made use of some Greek manuscripts that had stemmed largely from what scholars have now designated as the Byzantine text (assembled between the 4th and 8th centuries)—an accumulation of writings that differed consid-

erably from other available texts that more closely resembled the earlier Hebrew manuscripts which had actually evolved from the Masoretic or standard Hebrew text, the one written originally in consonants only. (The Masoretic text supplied the model from which the Torah and Old Testament were derived.)

The brief but startling conclusion to be drawn from these facts is that virtually the entire Old Testament, as we know it—albeit erected upon a Judaic foundation—was recomposed to a significant degree by Christians (white gentiles). It is highly likely that many passages were carefully reinterpreted to reflect a more humanitarian or a more acceptably decent point of view. Countless other passages were deliberately inserted to reflect Christian words and deeds. A passage in Psalms (83:18) is a good example of the manner in which the Old Testament was Christianized. "That men may know that thou, whose name is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth," could only have been written after the name Jehovah had been coined in the 16th century.

Apart from the literary upgrading and the extensive rewriting of the Bible, however, the gentile authors were unable to eliminate many of the Old Testament exploits and exaggerations written by Jews about Jews. If there is a single, solid fact that can be gleaned from the Christian-Judaic Scriptures, it is this: The Jews, of all the world's peoples, are the most obsessed with themselves—an insufferable attitude more detrimental than beneficial. To paraphrase a passage in Ecclesiastes, "They swallow up themselves with their foolishness." Less eloquent, but more pertinent to our point in time, is an analysis of Jewish foolishness written by Alvin Levine in an article for the Jewish periodical "Jewish Week-American Examiner." Referring to anti-Semitism in America, Levine described what he called the "main cause" of anti-Semitism in the U.S., as being "our Jewish leaders and many Jewish people, who are becoming more and more short-sighted, dogmatic, inflexible and arrogant. In this country the Jewish people are treated better than any other country in the world, including Israel. This mood may soon disappear unless sensible reason prevails." (Amen, brother!)

Regarding the haphazard assembling of the many biblical books that eventually became known as "The Good Book," some of the most important biblical documents in the whole world—the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Chester Beatty Papyri and the Greek Codex Sinaiticus—hadn't been turned up as yet by some people rummaging around in out of the way places. But no one seemed to mind.

Along about that same time, the "Rhemes and Douai Version" (1609–10), was masterminded by the Romanist Party, "for the speedy abolishing—of false and impious sectes."

Suffice it to say, it didn't worke.

The Authorized Version appeared at length in 1611; and along with its revised model (the Revised Version), it is popularly known to the present date as "The Authorized King James Version."

Time out for a word or two about King James:

"His big head, slobbering tongue and rickety legs, stood out in as grotesque a contrast with all that men recalled of Henry, or Elizabeth, as his

want of personal dignity, buffoonery, coarseness of speech, pedantry, and cowardice," says J. R. Green.

Now I ask you, was he really worse than Henry?

Soon after the debut of the Authorized Version, there appeared just to keep things popping, "The Discharge Bible"—("I discharge thee before God . . ."); "The Ears-To-Ear Bible"—("Who hath ears to ear, let him hear . . ."); "The Vinegar Bible"—bearing the title, "Parable of the Vinegar," over Luke; "The Wifehater's Bible"—("If any man come to me and hate not his own father . . . yea, and his own wife also . . ."); "The Printer's Bible"—("Printers have persecuted me without a cause . . ."); "The Murderer's Bible"—reading, "Let the children first be killed" instead of "filled"; and lasteth but not leasteth, "The Wicked Bible."

"The Wicked Bible" is singularly noteworthy for having contained the passage, "Thou shalt commit adultery." For reasons that need not be limned, this tome sold like hotcakes.

In 1870, the Convocation of Canterbury appointed a committee to consider the inexhaustible subject of revision; and, with the exception of the snobbish Roman Church, all pitched in to fork up another overhaul job. The result was the Revised Version of the Authorized Version of the King James Bible—as mentioned above. It was presented to the convocation in 1881 and the revised Apocrypha appeared in 1895.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The Holy Maidenhead

I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children.
(Exodus 20:5.)

The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father.
(Ezekiel 18:20.)

Not content with leaving well enough alone, along about the middle of the 20th century a cluster of eclectic Christians plunged a piping hot, brand new, Holy Bible into the literary breast, a "Revised Standard Edition" extensively hawked as being the epitomy of simplicity, directness and spiritual power—with the result that certain others of our good citizenry raised such an anti-revisionism ruckus, hand in hand with book burning rumors, that it appeared for quite some time that this new *biblia* might be destined for the fiery furnace.

At the heart of this raging brushfire within the ranks of the Christian brotherhood was the fact that a number of discerning Christian churchmen had made the rather dicey decision that the King James version of the Bible should be altered here and there. One ticklish controversy swirled around a substitution in Isaiah (7:14) which reads as follows in the Authorized Version: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel" (meaning, "God with us"). The revisionists, horror of horrors, decided that the words "young woman" should be substituted for the word "virgin" in that passage in Isaiah; and to say that holy hell broke loose over this meddling with Holy Writ would barely screw the discontent to the sticking point. (When it comes to orthodoxy, one does not tamper with virginity with impunity.)

To stray for a moment, it appears that man *must have his virgin*—which seems to me to be a lot of energy channeled in the wrong direction. "Virginity has its special reward hereafter," Saint Augustine once said. (Now what could that be, I wonder? And what's wrong with its reward here?) Augustine is the one who earned immortality with the declaration, "Give me chastity, but not now!" Saint Augustine, you will recall, has been tagged "The Father of Orthodoxy." (Better he should have been called "The Father of the Double Standard.") Augustine was always coming up with something pithy. "I would not believe the Gospels to be true," he once observed, "unless the authority of the Catholic Church constrained me." And he is famous

for the epigram, "Inter faeces et urinas nascimur"—a *cliché du jour,* if ever I heard one.

Should anyone be interested, Shakespeare is quite eloquent on the subject of virginity—and his rhetoric displays little affection for the intact maidenhead: "Virginity murders itself, and should be buried in highways out of all sanctified limit, as a desperate offendress against nature," he says, among other critical things about virginity, in *All's Well That Ends Well.* "Virginity breeds mites, much like a cheese . . . Virginity is peevish, proud, idle, made of self-love, which is the most inhibited sin in the canon. Keep it not; you cannot choose but lose by it . . . Away with it!"

The sainted Augustine, on the other hand, was so entranced with the idea of virginity in others (a theological dictum not applicable to those who make the rules, presumably), that he believed it to be superior to marriage. The monk Jovinian wasn't as taken with the idea, and he made the mistake of saying so in public. He was excommunicated for his recklessness. Augustine was convinced, moreover, that virgins were especially in danger from devilish imps and demons who would take advantage of them. He seemed to be impressed with the belief that there were "many proven instances that Sylvans and Fauns, who are commonly called Incubi, had often made wicked assaults upon women, and satisfied their lusts upon them; and that certain devils, called Duses by the Gauls, are constantly attempting and effecting this impurity."

And then there was Saint Jerome. Marriage may result in the destruction of virginity, he surmised; nonetheless, since marriage produced new virgins in the form of children, it couldn't be an altogether bad thing; hence, it should at least be tolerated. (It isn't easy to argue with logic like that.)

On the female side of the fence Thecla was such a fervent defender of her chastity that she was reverenced by lions. And if you think that's far out, just consider what happened to Catherine of Alexandria. In the name of holy chastity, she refused all marriage; and for such a noble sacrifice she was taken directly to heaven where she was betrothed to Christ by none other than Mary herself.

But to more serious things . . .

For thousands of years mankind has been infatuated with intact maidenheads. The unstained or untainted birth belief that gods and heroes can only be born of virgins dated from the most primitive stages of savagery to cultural stages far above savagery. Almost anything could contribute to miraculous conception, the operation of the moon or the sun, or bathing in the sea or in other waters, or rain, or lightning, or by partaking of certain foods. Isis was impregnated with a flash of lightning. In the Babylonian story of creation a wind hovers over Tiamat, or chaos, and impregnates her. The holy spirit Kneph impregnated a queen by holding a cross to her mouth. Philo writes that God impregnated Sarah, Leah, Rebecca, Zipporah and others and that Moses found his wife with child by God when he took her. None other than those august cogitators Pliny, Virgil and Augustine believed that mares could be fertilized by winds. According to Plutarch, birds might be impregnated in the same manner. Lactantius was so convinced that certain animals were accustomed to conceive by the wind and the breeze, he was surprised that anyone would think it "wonderful" that a virgin could be

impregnated by the Spirit of God. In a passionate appeal for support of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Jesus, Origen emphasized that the female vulture had no contact with the male. And some of the ancient scholars thought that mice were impregnated by eating salt.

Like nearly everything else in the Christian faith, the Holy Virgin also had a pagan origin. For centuries Christians believed that virginity could work miracles. Ambrose said that because of her chastity Mary sister of Moses led the women through the Red Sea. The cult of the Mother as Virgin Goddess was forced on the Church by the power of the pagan idea. First there was the *mater dolorosa,* in which "loveliness and patheticism were chiefly striven for," then there was the exalted, crowned and enthroned queen of heaven and of virtue, and finally, a third type, which was the ideal mother. The worship of the Queen of Heaven was flourishing long before the time of Jeremiah. When the Christian Church finally appointed its festivals, it chose the 25th of March as "Lady Day" for the reason that this date was celebrated throughout the Grecian and Roman world as the festival of the miraculous conception of the Blessed Virgin Juno. (A cautionary note: The terms "Virgin Birth" and "Immaculate Conception" are not synonymous. The Virgin Birth refers to the "miraculous conception" of Jesus. The Immaculate Conception applies to Mary, mother of Jesus, because she was conceived without the original sin on her soul, according to the Church. The original sin was eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden.)

Just what is it that makes virginity so palatable? Why does vaginal purity seem to be an indispensible adjunct to higher religious thought?

Well, to get right down to it, virginity is going to be with us for just as long as savior-gods and divine heroes are going to be with us. People like that are always born of virgins, it seems.

Why?

It isn't difficult to explain. A virgin birth carries with it a lot of weight. Not just any Tom, Dick or Harry can be born of a virgin, you know. With the very rarest of exceptions, not even kings or philosophers or communist dictators are born of virgins. (There was an ancient Eastern myth of a Redeemer-King born of a virgin; and legend has it that Plato's mother was a pure virgin when she was impregnated by Apollo. But we'll spare you any further details here.) Indeed, there is no such thing as a savior-god whose birth hasn't been vaginally virginal—uncorrupted, that is, by the polluting seed of the lusting male.

The *man-god* is an earthly hero; he must be man but he must be totally unlike any other human being; he must be an *incomprehensibly exhalted personality;* he must be born of earthly woman but he must also be the offspring of a god; he must be the "primordial image" of the encounter of the pure, virginal, earth-woman, and the Divine seed; he must be able to gain the secret and power to become immortal on earth; he must be all of these things. And since no ordinary human being could ever be all of these things, the agency of deity and the spirit of supernaturalism must be involved. Hence a virginal birth.

There were many virginal mothers of divine heroes and saviors in the ancient world; but it was the Greek precedent—a daughter of earth, impregnated by the Divine touch—which held the most appeal to Christians.

A sagacious ancient historian named Arrian described his faith in the validity of the virgin birth with these words: "It seems to me that a hero totally unlike any other human being could not have been born without the agency of the deity." (And *that* . . . is where it's *at*.)

In this connection, it's interesting to note that various and sundry heavyweights within the Christian power structure once decided that the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christian savior-god, wasn't pure enough; so they declared that he hadn't emerged from the "parts of shame" from which mere mortals emerge. Jesus, they preached to anyone who would listen, had emerged from the navel or the ear or from some other part of the female anatomy that could in no way be associated with the unholy genitals. (Actually, they weren't exactly out of sync with the times, since Augustine had once asserted that "God spake by the angel and the Virgin was impregnated through the ear . . ."; and Christian painters followed that up with artistic representations of the Holy Ghost entering Mary's ear in the shape of a dove. Poseidon was also known for impregnating women by whispering in their ears.)

In their zeal to preserve purity at any cost, certain devotees of Christian righteousness, suffering from *dementia virginitatis,* commonly known as "virginity frenzy," even maintained that Jesus had entered the womb of his mother fully formed, and that he had been conceived and born without any physical changes in the body that bore him. (It isn't difficult to understand why this bent of thought never really caught on. Shaky ideas can be carried only so far before they dissolve into objects of hysterical merriment.)

It should be obvious by now that the craziness and silliness factors were exceedingly high during some of the Christianization of the Western world. Despite all of the experimentation within the realm of the intact maidenhead controversy, however, nothing interfered with the basic premise. Today, nearly everyone, from the tiniest kid in Sunday School to the raunchiest wino on Skid Row, believes in the virgin birth—just as for nineteen centuries or so nearly everyone else in the Christian world has accepted the belief.

Nearly everyone, that is, except for a couple of spoilsports named Mark and John.

Curiously enough the spectacular virgin birth is not recorded in the Gospel of Mark or in the Gospel of John.

Maybe nobody told them.

On the other hand, maybe they just weren't impressed. After all, as indicated above, virgin births weren't exactly at a premium in the ancient world. Savior-gods were all the rage in those days since no self-respecting mystery cult could afford to be without one. For a long time before the Nazarene was supposedly crucified into history, savior-gods were performing miracles, dying horrible deaths, returning from the dead and generally raising hell with the ungodly all over Asia.

There was Osiris and Attis and Mithra and Buddha and Krishna and Poseidon, and heaven knows who all; enough, indeed, to prompt certain scholarly but cynical souls to speculate that the distinct similarities between the Christian savior-god and those who preceded him could scarcely be attributed to coincidence.

"Blatant nonsense!" retorted the Christian Establishment. As any fool could plainly see, they protested, Satan, the deceiving serpent, had anticipated Christianity and planted all those disquietingly similar events for the devilish purpose of confusing the true issues, causing as much chaos as possible, and deceiving simple-minded skeptics who would question the very existence of the noses protruding from their faces if it could be found to be profitable. "*Habet Diabolus Christos suos!*" ("The Devil has his Christs!") cried an exasperated Firmicus, in response to pagan mockery. (I'm reminded at this point that by the time of the Reformation there were said to be 100,000 prostitutes in England who were largely dependent upon the ecclesiastics for their patronage; and further, ecclesiastical court records of the Middle Ages show that sexual offenses were fifty times as common among the clergy as among the non-clergy. It's safe to presume, therefore, that the "deceiving serpent" was frequently pressed into service in those days. Since women often gave birth to children that perfectly resembled the parish priest, it's easy to understand why Satan's power of impersonation came to be regarded with considerable awe.)

Another method of rationalizing the similarities between the Christian Christ and the other savior-gods, as well as the similarities between Christianity and the mystery cults, was to blame everything on the Jews. (Of the abominations that can be laid at the door of the Jews, this is not one of them.) The story goes something like this: The ancient secret tradition was in harmony with Christian teaching which came much later. In the hands of the Jews, however, much of this philosophy was "narrowed down" to suit the exclusive and elitist system of the Jewish hierarchy with salvation for the Jews alone being the end product of the Messianic dream. Jesus supposedly speaks of the "key of knowledge" that was taken away by those execrable hypocrites known as the scribes and the Pharisees. What did he mean by the key of knowledge? Well, that was supposed to be the *sacred tradition* which *foreshadowed* the doctrines of Christianity. But the rabbis perverted that tradition and concealed from the people the traditional explanation of the sacred books by means of which they would have been able to recognize the Messiah in the person of Jesus Christ. All that is necessary then to resolve this dilemma is a simple realization of the fact that certain circumstances in the life of Christ were foreshadowed by earlier religions because they had an intuition of Christian mysteries. (The capacity of the theological mind to rationalize in favor of what the emotions want to believe seems to be beyond all power of exaggeration.)

In response to this sort of thing, the unregenerate cynic might retort: All right, already! But why couldn't God have anticipated Christianity in a less confusing manner and planted a few distinct and unquestionable signposts along the way just to prove that He really gave a damn? After all, all we have to go on is what the Christian Establishment tells us; and as everyone knows—everyone under thirty, that is—establishmentarians cannot be trusted to tell the truth even when asked the time of the day. (We are supposed to believe that religious historians are more honest than other historians. Anyone who believes that would believe a sailor on horseback.)

But God *did* leave some clear and unquestionable signposts that support the existence of Christianity, argues the Christian power structure: The Bible

is *filled* with prophetic and miraculous events, they insist, which *prove* that Christianity is "part of God's master plan for the world."

Before opening that can of worms, however, let's resolve the business at hand—namely, the substitution of the words "young woman" for the word "virgin" in Isaiah. (The original statement meant only that a woman would have a son who would be King of Israel. Big deal! An educated *guess,* at best; or just part of the conventional wisdom of the day. A similar statement could be made any day of any year in 20th century America: "A young woman will have a son who will be President of the United States.")

For nearly 2000 years the Christians have been claiming the Isaiah statement to be *prophetic*. A Messiah is going to be born of a virgin, says the Bible, and lo and behold, Jesus, the Christian savior-god is born of a virgin in Judea—unquestionable proof that the Scriptures are divinely inspired, and solid evidence that Jesus of Nazareth is *really* the Son of God.

But there has always been a great big catch to this story. *That isn't the ways the Jews wrote it in the first place*. The Hebrew word "almah," supposedly used in the early Jewish writings, could never under any interpretation be mistaken to mean virgin. Almah means simply a girl, a young woman. "Bethulah" is the Hebrew word that would have been used to indicate a virgin.

"Well, well," muses the incredulous reader, as he wonders how the word "virgin" got in there.

After the Christians decided to make the Holy books of the Hebrews their Bible, they not only slanted the writings of the New Testament to match parts of the Old Testament, they misread and corrupted the writings of the Jews in order to provide Christianity with a historic background and a predictive warrant. (No wonder the Bible turned out to be "prophetic.")

For obvious reasons, that sort of thing didn't set well with the Jews. After all, it was *their* Bible (the Old Testament part of it, to be sure), and they weren't the least bit overjoyed about the fact that a bunch of upstarts who called themselves Christians were tampering with their "sacred" records. As early as the 2nd century, according to Salomon Reinach, the Jews were pointing out to Greek Christians the errors that were being made in Christian interpretations of Hebrew writing. Even Saint Jerome admits that the Jews were accustomed "to meet us with the objection that in Hebrew the word *Almah* does not mean a *virgin,* but a *young woman*. And, to speak truth, a virgin is properly called *Bethulah*."

Although few people seem to have noticed over the centuries, the Jews have been bitching about this, along with numerous other changes, for nearly two thousand years—which finally paid off to some small degree apparently, since certain aware Christians of the 20th century decided to right at least one of the wrongs that had been perpetrated by their more zealous forerunners. Hence, the change in Isaiah in the Revised Standard Edition.

Despite some rather pregnant opposition, this updated scriptural lucubration sold fists-over-heels, as it were; and, wonder of mind-boggling wonders, it was for quite some time posted near the top in the ranks of this nation's *non-fiction* literary best-sellers in the 1950's.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Miracle and Prophecy

We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place.

(II Peter 1:19.)

The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means . . . From the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

(Jeremiah 5:31; 6:13.)

"Among the main proofs of the divine origin of the Scriptures are miracle and prophecy." That is what the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says, remember?

Ah yes, miracle and prophecy . . .

Miracles are those wondrous, magical and supernatural events that do not result from the actions of common, ordinary, planet-bound mortals. Anyone who can turn water into wine, for instance, is not just your average run-of-the-mill kind of guy. As far as Christians are concerned, only savior-gods and Messiah types can do that sort of thing.

It is of the utmost significance, therefore, that a savior-god be linked with "miraculous" happenings, like that infallible sign of miraculousness, a virgin birth—which, in the final analysis, is not your average run-of-the-mill kind of miracle. Things of that sort give a divine hero credence. Then his followers can say, "You see, our guy can do things no other human can do. That proves he is greater than human, and therefore a god." (*Quod erat demonstrandum*—or words to that effect.) If a rose began to fly like a bird, if a horse began to quote Shakespeare, that would be something beyond their nature or capacities or powers, and the rose and the horse would no longer be ordinary. In like manner, if a man who is human raises the dead and walks on water, and gives sight to the blind, he would be more than just human, he would be (or so the Christians claim) both man and God.

But once again we come to something of a catch in the story. There really wasn't anything very miraculous about miracles "at that point in time" in Palestine that we are concerned with—in the sense that they were *rare,* that is. Heavens, miraculous events were so common they could scarcely be called miraculous. Business with the supernatural was the everyday order of the day. Rain, lightning, thunder, dreams, the flight of birds, the intestines of beasts, anything and everything imaginable, was a means of divi-

nation. Every heathen shrine boasted its miracles. Every heathen deity and semi-divine hero owed much of his (or her) glory to the miraculous healings ascribed to him or her. Countless Jewish rabbis worked miracles by the buckets-full. The Talmud reveals that. With the help of a benevolent divinity, dutifully called on for aid by the rabbis, such marvels as predicting the future, reviving the dead, casting out demons, crossing rivers dry-shod, curing the sick by touch or by prayer, were nearly as prevalent throughout the entire area as the hordes of hellish demons that bedevilled the populace. Miraculous happenings were, for Jesus, as for every other Jew, the natural mode of divine activity.

Even astrology and magic were acceptable chimeras to the most objective minds. The appeal for the extraordinary, the miraculous, the supernatural, was nearly as natural as breathing, not only to heathens, but to Jews and Christians alike. It was a peculiarity of the Jews that any great leader to be accepted must accredit himself by working miracles.

Everywhere the Christian belief in magic was just as hearty as that of the heathen or the Jew. Without a single exception, the Fathers of Christianity maintained the reality of the pagan miracles as fully as their own. Supernaturalism was a commonly accepted mode of thought in that age. The witnesses of so-called *miracles*—it is important to note—had no familiarity with the conception of natural law; they had no training in accuracy as we understand it; and they had a childlike attraction to the extraordinary. Needless to say, they were not historically unique. Even today, many people are more involved with yesterday's miracles than today's truths.

"The greatest miracle," said the great mathematician, Poincaré, "is that miracles do not happen."

But G. Stanley Hall sums it up best of all: "True miracles are things which are absolutely false. They never happen . . . Why then the persistent credulity of so many who should know better concerning this class of marvels? The answer is, because these records are so overdetermined by the higher meanings which they embody . . . All discussion of whether the miracles of the New Testament were literally performed or not represents a low plane of crass religious materialism."

It would be exceedingly difficult to imagine a less stable foundation of sand upon which to erect a system of religious and philosophical thought than the primitive *miracle*. But it wouldn't be difficult to imagine an *equally* unstable foundation of sand upon which to erect a religious system: I'm referring to the *other* so-called "main proof" of the divine origin of the Scriptures—*prophecy*.

Of all the simplistic and demeaning claptrap that encumbers the Christian system, nothing is more insulting to the intelligent, civilized mind than the belief that the so-called "prophetic" books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Revelation and the twelve "minor" prophets provide a detailed sequence of events preceding the second coming of the Christian Messiah and the utopian conditions that will follow.

Today, books exploiting the absurdities of prophetic revelations sell millions of copies. "Fully one-quarter of the Bible is prophecy," the writers tell us. Out of the Old Testament's 23,210 verses, 6,641 contain predictive material, or 28-1/2 percent. Out of the New Testament's 7,914 verses, 1,711

contain predictive material, or 21-1/2 percent. So for the entire Bible, 27 percent of it is said to contain prophetic statements. Among the more important prophecies are those that refer to the Christian savior-god, Jesus called the Christ. They supposedly predict that he will be born of a virgin, that he will be born a Jew, and born in Bethlehem, and triumphantly enter Jerusalem, and be betrayed by a friend for thirty pieces of silver, that his hands and feet will be pierced, that his bones will not be broken, that he will suffer and die, that lots will be cast for his robe, and that he will be embalmed and entombed.

In addition—according to the more ardent prophetologists—the "signs of the times" in the Bible predict the accelerated lawlessness, political unrest, revolutions fomented by world communism, super weaponry, population explosion, changing global weather patterns, declining morals and disintegration of families—all the evidence of a world plunging toward self-destruction and the Second Coming of the Messiah, Jesus.

To the Christians, prophets are forecasters of events long before they happen. Can *you* do that sort of thing? Can your neighbor? Certainly not. Here, again, we have something that carries with it a lot weight. The involvement of prophecy, you see, designates by implication something above and beyond the common and the ordinary; and, once again, that is the kind of thing that helps to give credence to the spectacular claims of the Church.

Just who were the Old Testament prophets? What were they up to?

One of the little known meanings synonymous with the word prophecy is *teaching*.

Rather than foretellers of the future, the prophets of the Old Testament were, first and foremost, *teachers*. They were concerned primarily with admonishing, exhorting, or denouncing their people, in conjunction with the teaching of the laws of God. They were strong and charismatic men. With clenched hands, enraged eyes, harsh voices and fearful faces, they denounced the evils among their people and they invoked the wrath of God upon the wickedness of his children. As we come to know them, we shall see why the word *prophet* was also synonymous with the word *madman* to the Hebrews. The prophets were lean, wild-eyed, shaggy and angry. They were overwhelmed by fear of the wifeless and womanless God-Father, the merciless and vindictive Yahweh. Consequently they were allergic to women and to practically all pleasures. Much like madmen, they were obsessed with their mission. Their constant theme was to preserve Israel in its racial and religious isolation.

The prophets played a twofold-role—political and theological. As political figures they played a leading role in the formation of the kingdom; as religious figures they were charismatic messengers who stood in the direct line of communication between God and his representative on earth, the king. Consider the enormous power they had in relation to the usual priest or witch doctor: As messengers of God, they stood before kings to pronounce judgements on their personal lives, to give advice concerning national policies, and to make predictions regarding the outcome of certain *contemporary* events—in much the same way psychics attempt to predict the outcome of events today. Through the prophets the divine word of Judgement was communicated directly to the ruler; and through the king, they

exhorted the nation to obey the laws of God.

The prophets were apocalyptists. The essence of apocalypticism is that it is the child of disorder; it sees the end immediately impending because the world appears to be incurably evil. The apocalyptic world view is pessimistic, deterministic, mechanical, external and literalistic. The prophets were the enthusiasts and the revivalists of their day. Social idealism, stern morality and religious fervor were the engines of their motivation.

Apocalypticism is a counsel of despair, a naive and heathen philosophy insisting that the only way to redeem the world is to destroy it. It is a point of view found in numerous other religious beliefs. The Hindu conception of Kali Yuga is an almost exact duplicate of it: "A monster of wickedness will hasten the coming of the Golden Age." Both the Assyrians and Egyptians expected a king to arise who would put an end to injustice and suffering and usher in their "millennium." Just as the Persian longed for the coming of Saoshyant, the Moslem for the Mahdi, and the ancient Greek for the Golden Age, so people everywhere are still hoping and praying and working for the coming of some miraculous new age.

The Jews were involved with their own "end time" belief. The great day of Yahweh, or day of Judgement, as it came to be called, would come to make an end to the the age of sin and evil and introduce the new age of righteousness and happiness in conjunction with a vindication of Israel and a punishment or destruction of all her foes. "The Day of the Lord will come like a thief, when the heavens will vanish with crackling roar, the stars will be set ablaze and melt, the earth and all its works will disappear . . ."

An "apocalypse," or *revelation,* deals with history under the guise of visions. Supernaturalistic in its world view, Israel dreamed its visions in the material provided by mythology and allegory. With the type of highly wrought allegorization found in Egyptian, Babylonian and Persian literature, along with the mythologies of Babylon (Ezekiel, for example, was very much under the influence of the imposing civilization of Babylon), Persia and Greece, as well as with the use of metaphorical language that would be impossible to anyone outside of the Hellenistic orient, the prophet could condemn his foes in the harshest language and create brilliant visions of a better time to come—not in some other lifetime or age, but in *his* time and age.

The apocalyptic prophets, whether Enoch, or the twelve sons of Jacob, or Moses, or Baruch, or Ezra, or Daniel, were not prophesying down the centuries about future events which were to come to pass for unheard-of peoples and nations; they were concerned only with *contemporary* accounts, with the happenings of *their* time, with the sins and evils of *their* people, and with the predicting of events that would occur in the near future, just as our pundits make educated guesses today.

Consider the book of Revelation, the New Testament apocalypse *par excellence* (various writers describe this book as "a work of hatred and frenzy," "the ravings of a maniac," and a "lamentable excrescence"). That the author of Revelation believes himself to be living in the last times could not under any circumstances be more obvious. From Amos to Jesus to Revelation, the prophetic cry was always the same: *Heed the signs of the times.*

Religion and morality were national affairs for Amos, Hosea and Micah.

Amos, Hosea and Isaiah used to the fullest extent the language of mythological catastrophe to describe the visitation of Yahweh's wrath.

Zephaniah, Habukkuk and Nahum were obsessed with the language of cataclysmic overthrow and cosmic catastrophe.

Jeremiah, who labored with a less fanciful imagination, wandered very rarely into the cloudland of rhapsodic catastrophe and dealt mainly with the conditions at hand. Jeremiah predicted, for instance, that the Captivity would exist for seventy years.

Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Joel all unite in threatening Israel for her sins.

Isaiah, Obadiah, Joel and Ezekiel describe the harsh punishment that will descend on Israel's adversaries.

Amos and Isaiah dwell on Yahweh's punishment of other nations without involving Israel's great day of Yahweh. Zephaniah and Jeremiah make the day of Yahweh to include all nations. All of Yahweh's indignation and fierce anger will be poured on all of the assembled kingdoms.

Both Joel and Amos quote the Jewish proverb, "Yahweh shall roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem." Joel interprets it to mean salvation for Israel; Amos sees it as a means of her punishment.

Nahum calls down the vengeance of Yahweh on the enemies of Israel, and especially on Nineveh which he predicts will collapse. Within a few years Nineveh falls, as Nahum had been keen enough to foresee.

Ezekiel predicted in 592 B.C. that Jerusalem would be destroyed. From that moment on he declaimed against his people and his land with true prophetic vengeance. His prevision was vindicated *in his time* when the army of Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

There are some dim stars in the prophetic heavens, according to the Christian Establishment. To cite but two of them, Haggai and Zechariah—who were "raised up by God" to revive the souls of the people and to urge them to finish the temple—are examples of prophets who have been relegated to the "minor" leagues by modern conjurors of prophetology. Haggai and Zechariah, you see, merely did their job—that which God supposedly asked them to do. They urged the people to pick up their spirits, get off their duffs, and finish the bloody temple. Their efforts paid off; they succeeded. In other words, they didn't embroider their work with as many wild-eyed and hysterical "ecstatic" fantasies which Christians could later reinterpret in a desperate attempt to support their beliefs. Consequently, they have been accused of lacking the power and theological dimension of the "major" prophets who were involved in "ecstatic prophecy."

Since prophecy is so necessary to the Christian system, it comes as no surprise to learn that the Christian Establishment calls the prophetic movement the most astonishing phenomenon in the history of Israel, with no real parallel anywhere in human history. (There is certainly no parallel in human history for what the Christians have done with what they call "biblical prophecy." To play recklessly on the words of the philosopher Seneca, since God has given man an irrational nature, it follows that nothing is more becoming to man than irrationality.)

In truth, there is nothing very astonishing or phenomenal about "prophecy."

Most of the so-called prophetic biblical books are merely compilations of spoken oracles delivered on special occasions—first handed down orally over a long period of time and with all of the changes that would naturally occur during that process, eventually to be written over and over by anonymous authors. You can well imagine how far what we have today has drifted from what was originally spoken or written.

Regarding the tone and outlook of apocalypticism, it is always the same: wars and rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, terrible sufferings, catastrophes beyond the limit of endurance, an increase of wickedness, the rise of the Antichrist (the Antichrist legend arose out of the old mythology of the primeval dragon, conquered, but not destroyed by God, who "in the last days" would rise again in revolt before being annihilated), and finally, a universal cataclysm; then, the end, with the Son of God (or Servant of Yahweh, or whoever) appearing on the clouds of heaven. This simplistic scenario is firmly fixed in Christian theology.

Apocalyptic Christians seem to wallow in the belief that even though the Gospel must be preached to the whole world, only a portion of the population will be saved; and they always seem to be glorying in the thought that the world is growing worse and worse, because that is supposed to be the foretelling sign of the cataclysm to come, which will be followed by the second coming of Christ. (Central to the death-and-damnation saturated Christian system is the belief that a part of humanity must always be doomed for all time.)

For centuries the flood-tides of apocalypticism have risen and abated with the signs of the times. There were the Apostolic Brethren and the Spirituals of the 12th and 13th centuries, the Taborites of the fifteenth, the Zwickau Prophets and the Anabaptists of the Reformation, the Fifth Monarchy Men and some of the Quakers of the 17th century in England, the Camisards and the "French Prophets," the Darbyites, the Irvingites, the Millerites, and the Mormons of the early 19th century, the French Catholic propheticism of the time of the Franco-Prussian War, and the evangelicals of the 20th century who believe that the Antichrist is alive somewhere in the world today and that the "end time" is just about upon us.

In their obsession with predictions that must come to pass exactly as written, the Christians have committed the moral crime of obscuring the prime value of the prophets as God's messengers of righteousness. Rather than accepting the prophets as forth-tellers (precursors of forthrightness), they have turned them into chimerical and fantastic fore-tellers to whom the current theories of the future must be fitted. It is bad enough that white gentiles of the Western world believe in the myth of a primitive savior-god who was born of a virgin, walked on water, and came to life after death; but to actually believe that the statements of wild-eyed zealots who lived nearly 3000 years ago have relevance to the events of our time is demeaning beyond the power of language to describe it.

And now consider the "prophetic vindication" of the New Testament. The Evangelists (including all of those who contributed to the writing and the rewriting of the Gospels during the first four centuries) lived in the same general area of the world where the writings of the Old Testament were both produced and available. They examined the literature of the Jews (or listened

to tales about spectacular prophecies and miracles), they chose excerpts and anecdotes that could best be used to prove the Christian religious case, and they carefully forged a literature that would underprop and illustrate the object of their faith.

If the Gospels had been written half a world away—thousands of miles from the land of Palestine—and if no logical connection could ever be shown to have existed between their authors and the Old Testament scribes, and if there were distinct similarities between the two Testaments that could not be shown to be the results of forgery or rewriting, perhaps a case could be made for the prophetic side of the story. To accept as "prophetic" the writings of people who could turn to the Jewish Scriptures at any time for inspirational ideas that might contribute to the Christian cause, however, is an exercise in simplistic nonsense that no serious scholar could ever condone. The legends that are supposedly "fulfilled" in the New Testament are nothing more than crude Christianized interpretations of Old Testament Scripture. The Evangelists repeat again and again the words "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled." To achieve that very aim, they deliberately fabricated a "prophetic" scenario.

In at least one more way prophecy is less than astonishing or phenomenal. Anyone with an active imagination and a little instruction in the "art" of prophesying can play the game. There is even a general formula (people are sheep, oppressive nations are beasts, horns typify kings, dragons are demonic powers of evil, etc.) that can be followed; but the truly imaginative prophet will always improvise on the theme. Here is an example of what can be called a 20th century *prophecy,* which—our contemporary *prophet* assures me—will be interpreted between two and three thousand years from today by the evangelicals of that day and time as being "truly inspired" (then the prophet took off his hat and the bird flew out):

> A great beast will arise in the earth . . . It will be guarded by dragons . . . The sheep will be oppressed . . . The beast will have twenty arms, three horns, and seven eyes . . . Wickedness will abound and the Antichrist will emerge from the beast . . . There will be wars and rumors of wars, and famines, earthquakes, terrible sufferings, and incredibly bad movies . . . Finally, there will be a universal cataclysm . . . Then, at last, after Armageddon, the great battle between Gog (Gog and Magog are not two entities, as has been misread by Christians; Gog is from the land of Magog) and the forces and angels of good, the beast will be destroyed, the wicked will be punished, the good will be vindicated, the Messiah will appear on the clouds of heaven . . . And all will live happily ever after.

Finally, these points must be made:

The Old Testament is a *Jewish* book. The Old Testament prophets were *Jews*.

Without exception, the Jews believed that the whole history of the world, past and future, had been definitely ordered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of the *Jewish* God.

The cry of the Jewish prophets was always the same: Israel must be vin-

dicated . . . Jewish racial and religious distinctiveness must be maintained . . . The foes of Israel must be punished or destroyed . . . The fallen angels and the hostile evil spirits must be overthrown . . . Faith must be restored . . . Righteous Jews must be brought within the sphere of God's mercy . . . Wicked Jews must suffer along with the Gentile . . . All Gentiles must be excluded.

The glorious regeneration, the New Age was coming, and coming *soon* ("For in a little, a very little now, The Coming One will arrive without delay . . .")—in *their* time, for *their* people . . . and for *nobody else*.

Ezra, speaking to the Jewish God, says it all:

> Thou hast said that for our sakes Thou hast created this world. But as for the other nations, which are descended from Adam, Thou hast said that they are nothing, and that they are like unto spittle; and Thou hast likened the abundance of them to a drop on a bucket . . .

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Versions of Versions

The dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward.

(Ecclesiastes 9:5.)

These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous unto life eternal.

(Matthew 25:46.)

By the time the latter half of the 20th century began to unfold, it should have been evident to any reasonable person that biblical versions were plentiful enough to satisfy even the most scripturally starved among us. But no such luck. It wouldn't be a strain on the truth to say that in the decades that followed, the American people found themselves up to their axes and asses in new Bibles. Indeed, to paraphrase Ecclesiastes 12:12, "Of the making of many Bibles, there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh."

An entire modern version of "The Holy Scriptures" (the Jewish translation of the Old Testament) was scheduled for completion in the 1980's. "The Living Bible," a free-flowing paraphrase that was supposed to be easy to read was in the planning stage. Also in the works were "The Amplified Bible," a volume possessing some of the features of a paraphrased version and some of the features of a commentary for the purpose of clarifying shades of meaning supposedly concealed by the traditional word-for-word method of translation, and "The New English Bible," considered to be a praiseworthy, though free-rendering modern British version; along with other varying modern versions like "The New American Standard Bible" and "The New American Bible."

Another of the more innovative scriptural versions of various and sundry preceding versions caused some controversy. I'm referring to "The Good News Bible," a late translation in the "natural, modern English of everyday conversation." The common-language version of the New Testament, called "Good News for Modern Man," was published in 1966. In 1967, seven translators began the "Good News" revision job on the Old Testament. Their translation, based on the traditional Masoretic Hebrew text, was completed in 1976.

In "The Good News Bible," the majestic and flowing language of the King James appears in the linguistic equivalent of "happy talk." (Right on, brothers and sisters!) "Thou shalt not kill," becomes a succinct and grossly

flattened, "Don't murder." As for the majestic, "The Lord is my shepherd," it unmajestically translates into, "I have everything I need." (The poetic 23rd Psalm, it seems, is on the escalator of declining literacy, headed for the ghetto of commonality: "The Lord is my guru, baby, and I got it all together. I'm hanging loose and laid back, as I walk the mean streets under the umbrella of the Man upstairs.")

The "Good News" version "is neither academic nor simplistic," argue the apologists for revisionism in response to considerable criticism. It is "to employ the language that adults normally speak," so it can be readily understood and easily comprehended by those who aren't well versed in English, either as a first or a second language. Difficult combinations of consonants, tongue-twisting phrases and long strings of unaccented words have been excluded.

An example: The phrase "prophesy with lyres" in I Chronicles 25:1 has been discarded because it could be easily mistaken for "prophesy with liars." And unusual words like "myrrh" have to be preceded by qualifications like "a drug called . . ." or whatever. God still works his miracles in mysterious ways in "The Good News Bible," you will be reassured to learn—but in meters and liters in keeping with our One Worldly times.

Listen, Noah, says God, "make your ark 133 meters long, 22 meters wide and 13 meters high. Make a roof for the boat and leave a space of 44 centimeters between the roof and the sides." And when it comes to that good old-fashioned daily sacrifice of two lambs, God instructs Aaron to "offer one kilogram of fine wheat flour mixed with one liter of pure olive oil," with the first lamb, and to "pour out one liter of wine as an offering."

With the American educational system turning out hordes of functional illiterates each year who are incapable of differentiating between "liar" and "lyre," you will have to admit that the appearance of the "Good News," easily readable, down to the salt-of-the-earth, Bible is a good thing. Perhaps it would be better served though, if it were renamed, "The Illiterates' Bible."

By 1980, the National Council of Churches was calling for a new rendering of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible for the purpose of purging all "sexist" language in references to God, Christ and humanity. "We must not lend aid and comfort to sexist attitudes and interpretation," declared the holier-than-thou NCC. (Heavenly days, no.) "It is no longer proper to think of God in the analogy of sex and gender."

The use of that awful sexist word "he" must be minimized, they declared, with the refraining from the use of pronouns replaced by a distinct theological style—the use of "the one" for "he," for instance. "Children" could be substituted for "sons." Names like "Adam" and "Abraham" should never be used alone; therefore, "and Eve" or "and Sarah" could be added to these references.

All references to "man" and "men" would be changed, the NCC task force promised. They suggested that "human being" and "human beings" be substituted instead. But I find this bent of thought very lax. Terms like huMAN, feMALE, and woMAN, are definitely sexist and should be mercilessly eradicated. "Hubees" (human beings), "Hufees" (human females), and "Huwoms" (human women), would be more appropriate, as can be

easily seen. (We could go on and on like this; but why beat another dead horse?)

Since this newest rendition of "The Books" will be de-sexed, as it were, perhaps it should be called, "The Sterilized Version of the Revised Versions of the Authorized Version." And consider this: What of the numerous Ethnic and Minority-slanted versions of the Revised Versions of the Authorized Version? I wouldn't doubt for a moment that some of them are already in the mental works of the Bible-builders; they just haven't begun to roll off the presses as yet.

In "The Soul Bible," Adam will be required to address God in the vernacular of the ghetto:

"Hey, God baby . . . Gimme some skin. What's happenin'?"

"Cool, little brotha'," says God. "What's shakin' witchoo?"

"I be doin' my thing in the garden, you know," says Adam, "an' my bitch Eve done laid this apple gig on me. I mean, man, it's the pits."

In the feminist-soul version of the Good Book, the story will be called "Eve and Adam," the main participants (under *any* circumstances, Adam will no longer be considered a *main* participant) will be female, and the Jewish God will be addressed in a somewhat different manner:

"Hey, big momma God," shouts Eve, as she sees the Lord approaching through the Garden. "Wait'll I lay on 'ya what that jive-sucker Adam be doin' now!"

Many indeed are the pertinent changes that will have to be made in a feminist rendition of Holy Writ. I'm thinking especially of that provocative passage in Genesis where God spells out Eve's punishment for eating the apple: "I will increase your trouble in pregnancy . . ." etc. etc. The following interpretation, in which *Adam's* troubles are spelled out for having eaten the apple and causing the Fall of Woman, might be acceptable: "I will increase your trouble and pain by causing you to be circumcised. In spite of this, you will still have desire for your wife, yet you will still be subject to her." And the marriage ceremony will be revised to read, "I now pronounce you Woman and husband." (Won't the lady libbers eat that up, though.)

Then, of course, there will have to be "The Gay Bible," in which the approach will be even more radical. First off, the *numero uno* story will be called "Adam and Bruce." "Wellllllll, God DAHlinggggggggg, helloooooooooo," coos Adam as he sees God entering the Garden. "Wait until you hear what that bitch Bruce has done now. You WON'T beLIEVE it!"

But even that may not be the end of it . . .

Somewhere down the pike, in the not too distant future perhaps, there may even be produced a communized version of the Revised Versions of the Authorized Version—a "People's Republic" rendition, you see, starring Marx the Father, Lenin the Son, and Hegel the Holy Ghost. (It was the German philosopher Hegel—in a virtual echo of Martin Luther—who described the state as an "absolutely divine principle" whose "majesty and absolute authority" must be recognized. The Hegelian ghost hovers everywhere over the socialist ideology: Nazi socialism, Fascist socialism, Communist socialism, Fabian socialism, and that half-assed Fabian-Third Force-New Deal socialism of American liberals.) Moses Engels will receive the

Ten Commandments of Communism beginning with, "Thou shalt have none other gods above thy Father Marx"; Lenin the Son will die to save the world for Communism; Judas Trotsky will betray the Son; and Stalin the Grand Inquisitor (a gentile reincarnation of Joshua?) will eliminate all who oppose the new religion.

Given the considerable number of left-wing Christians in the Western world, along with the rapid growth of the theology of Marxism in Central and South America, the concept of a communized Bible appears less outlandish than at first sight. Rather than a strict political or economic order, Communism, *per se*, must be viewed as a religious order—a complete doctrine for private and social behavior and an all-embracing belief; a system in which dogmatic perfectionism replaces growth; a system rooted in the establishment of blind obedience to authority.

Today, more and more Catholic priests in the so-called Third World are exhorting their people to "Take up arms in the name of Christ!" Join the communist-led "liberation" forces, in other words. (Where in the Gospels, I wonder, does Jesus urge his followers to take up arms against Caesar?) Following a trip to Cuba, which set him on his revolutionary course, Fr. Ernesto Cardenal, a Nicaraguan priest, had this to say: "Also in those years the movement called 'theology of liberation' arose in Latin America and we realized that there was no incompatibility between the authentic Christian religion of the Gospel and Marxism."

Left-wing Christians are not playing this game alone. In the 1960's Tunisia's Habib Bourguiba claimed Mohammed's companions "were socialists before the invention of the word"; and Cambodia's Prince Norodom Sihanouk contended that "our Socialism is first and foremost an application of Buddhism." (Doesn't it all sound familiar, though?)

The ultimate closed society—a society in which the mind is governed by political and religious dogmas that cannot be questioned—was the monotheistic religion developed by the Jews about the time of Moses. Like all other peoples, the Hebrews had been polytheists—worshipers of more than one god. By 530 B.C. at the latest, the national theology of Judaism had become a totally God-centered, monotheistic faith. (The term "Judaism" is used to distinguish the postexilic civilization of the race, and Hebrew for the pre-exilic.) The people were ruled by kings who were the Jewish God's emissaries on earth. Personal religion was unknown. The individual was merely a cell in the social organism. Religion was ritual and fear. To this all-embracing church-state cult was added the power and force of a total patriarchy. Assyrians, Egyptians, Chaldeans, Phoenicians, Persians, Romans, all had a divine mother. The Jews had none. They totally surrendered to the Will of the Father, the harsh, vindictive Yahweh—in portrait form: *his countenance craggy and strongbeaked, his hair wild, his eyes angry and terrifying . . . a being out of Jeremiah, lonely, solitary, childless, unwedded and unloved . . . the ultimate patriarch, as merciless as the bleakness in his eyes*. Not coincidentally, the 20th-century world's most closed system, the communist state, as conceived in the minds of Marx, Engels, Parvus, Zinoviev, Riazanov, Sokolnikov, Martov, Hanecki, Bronski, Radek and Lenin, has emerged as an equally totalitarian, patriarchal faith.

In the primitive religion of tribalism each nationalistic activity was super-

vised by a god. The one religious effect of the spread of Roman power and influence in so many parts of the world was to contribute the cult of emperor worship to older national religions. To a large degree, the religion of Rome was a political or State religion. To an even greater degree, the same is true of Communism.

Marx the Father dismissed God as a hoax and turned society into a god (from the "will of God" to the "good of society," in one ecstatic leap); and he demanded a belief in a social paradise and in a power that would lead directly to it. There was no time for ideals, or for such "soulful ravings," as he called them, as "justice," "humanity," or "morality." There was only time for struggle. "Morality must be completely subordinated to the interests of the class struggle," declared Lenin the Son. Nothing mattered outside of the sacred scriptures of Marxism. The works of Hegel, Marx, Engels, Plekhanov and Lenin contained for the Bolsheviks the last word of human knowledge. To any thinking human being, a state religion means only one thing: *death to human freedom*. Freedom can only exist when state and religion are separated. But the religion of Marxism makes this separation impossible, for its *creed* is politics; its church *is* the state.

Curiously, the Communists call themselves godless; yet, like emotionally immature, fatherless orphans, they abase themselves before the god-man, Father-symbols of Communism: Marx, Stalin, Lenin, Mao, Ho, Fidel, Tito, Brezhnev, *et al*. A neat parallel can be drawn between Communism as it exists in our world and ancient emperor worship. The ancient world is filled with examples of the deified man. The founders of cities were frequently worshiped by the inhabitants. Leningrad and Stalingrad are examples of cities named in honor of modern dictator-gods. (Stalin, of course, is an example of an emperor who fell out of favor.) Instead of Roman-style statues, massive portraits of the Communist gods are everywhere. And just as infallible wisdom and remarkable achievements were ascribed to the ancients, similar attributes have been ascribed to Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and others. The Father-gods of Communism think of themselves as deterministic scientists who have found in Dialectical Materialism the key to the universe, and who cannot be prevented from founding the classless society, the heaven on earth of Marxist eschatology.

The first great step in the art of the use of reason to formulate an integrated view of man, of existence, and of the universe—as opposed to the use of mysticism—was the birth of philosophy in ancient Greece, one of the proudest moments in the history of the human species. Unfortunately, the noble Greeks also had a penchant for blending religion with politics. They raised the worship of rulers to a state cult. Ovid acclaimed Augustus as a god . . . Empedocles proclaimed himself a god . . . Plato thought that departed heroes became holy angels on earth . . . Sparta had a temple for the worship of Lycurgus . . . Philip and Alexander both thought of themselves as being godlike. The Romans adopted this concept and raised it virtually to the level of an art form. "I think I am becoming a god," Vespasian said, possibly in jest, on his death bed. But Caligula was serious about his divinity when, on many statues, he substituted an image of his own head for that of Jupiter. Severus scoffed at the language of adoration, but Heliogabalus did his best to unite all forms of religion in a worship of

himself. Domitian added the word *god* to his titles and filled his palace with statues of himself. His official documents called him *Dominus et Deus Noster*.

Emperor worship has always been a powerful weapon in the arsenal of the ruler. As Polybius points out, the Romans used the phenomenon "as a check upon the common people . . . seeing that every multitude is fickle and full of lawless desires, unreasoning anger and violent passion, the only resource is to keep them in check by mysterious terrors and scenic effects." Livy said that Numa used "fear of the gods as the most effective thing for an ignorant and rough multitude." Varro perceived that "It is in the interest of the State to be deceived by religion." The slightest disrespect to the image of the emperor was a capital crime. Should a drunkard accidentally touch an image of Claudius he was denounced as a spy and a traitor. A person found undressing near a statue of Augustus or entering a brothel bearing a coin with his image on it would be put to death. (It is to be noted that since Yahweh was so all-powerful and pervasive a Jewish king could never be more than God's earthly emissary. To worship an emperor was, to the Jew, blasphemous.)

All man-god symbols are alike. Just as the Caesars did centuries ago, the dictator Father-gods of Communism convert religious emotions to their political advantage. We have a prime modern example of this phenomenon—on a much smaller scale—in one of America's own backyards, San Francisco. I'm referring to the infamous Jim Jones.

There is nothing the powerful Catholic Church would like better than to re-establish the medieval union of church and state and create a global theocracy. But this is an impossible dream. Today, the entire Christian Church and its Christ symbol is on the defensive, fighting to regain its sovereignty. The force that passes under the name of Communism is the enemy with its revival on the one hand of ancient emperor worship, and the promises of its political Messiahs on the other of an all-appealing cradle-to-the-grave form of security. Under the Christian myth, all things will be yours in the afterlife. Under the Communist myth, all things will be yours in this life. In addition, Communism provides the much more personal dictator Father-gods to whom to relate as opposed to the remote and lost Yahweh or some curious Son of God who supposedly became a man for a time in order to die for our sins.

Tragically, the displaced Father-homage of ruler worship is alive and well and living in the Western world—particularly in the United States. Countless intellectuals have deserted Christianity, a religion in which nonsensicality has been made the very basis of belief. In order to fill the vacuum, they have turned toward that religion of immoralism known as Marxism. To many of the intellectual and cultural leaders of the United States, along with a goodly number of the drug-intoxicated entertainers and artists of America (among the shallowest thinkers of our age), the gospel of "total equality" and "total happiness" here and now as preached by socialism is more appealing than the Christian gospel of renunciation.

Should the reader have some difficulty in accepting this proposition, consider for a moment the experiences encountered by the highly regarded French playwright, Eugene Ionesco, during several months of lecturing and teaching

in the United States. To his amazement and utter dismay, Ionesco discovered that American intellectuals and students are afflicted with an intense case of masochistic self-hatred manifesting itself in the insistence that Americans are humanity's greatest criminals. When he lectured that America was not the worst nation on earth, "the liberals looked at me askance," he writes. And when he told them that a Soviet dictatorship was at least as bad as a right-wing military dictatorship, they mocked him "with laughter and jeers."

To declare that America, still the best and freest country on earth regardless of her faults, can be unfavorably compared to Soviet Russia, one of the worst dictatorships on earth, is incalculably obscene. The socialists, left-wing Christians and ultra-liberals of the West so desperately want to believe that Marxism is a viable alternative to the free-market politico-economic system, they are committed on principle to see no difference between the two sides—and even at times to see America as the worse of the two nations. They condone and accept the abolition of all property, executions without trial, torture chambers, slave-labor camps and the bullet-riddled bodies of refugees trying to slip through the Iron Curtain. These "liberals" who accept the atrocities and the rule of terror in Communist countries as a "way of life," are the very people Khrushchev was referring to when he sneered, "We spit in the face of an American, and he calls it dew." For another incisive point of view consider the words of the late Arthur Koestler who describes these same people as "men of good will with strong frustrations and feeble brains, the wishful thinkers and idealistic moral cowards, the fellow-travelers of the death train." (Better words could not be found to describe the morally bankrupt modern liberal.)

The reader may be wondering by now what things of this sort have to do with the seemingly endless production of Scriptural versions. Just this: I have been paving the way to stating that I dislike seeing the Christian Bible chopped up, watered down, and revised to a point where it can be used as a weapon of another ideology against the West. Admittedly, my satire was a bit broad when I spoke of a communized Bible starring Marx the Father (a fitting Father-god, as blindly zealous as Luther, and as catechetical as Torquemada). Since numerous modern Christians see no incompatibility between the Gospel and Marxism, however, it isn't difficult to imagine that a few significant changes in just the right places could do much to perpetuate that belief.

Another point: *Revisionism* is being used by Christians for the equally insidious purpose of "cleaning up their act." Each Revised Version is always somewhat more sanitized than its predecessor. The latest abridged version (as of October 1982, at least; heaven knows what lies around the next corner) is "The Reader's Digest Bible," a 40 percent shorter version than the 850-thousand-word Revised Standard Edition. According to the editor—who began this trimming and slimming effort in 1975—"it's also more readable and more inviting." You can guess what *that* means, I'm sure. More of the filth, violence, degeneracy, fanaticism, ignorance, perversions, superstitions, and deliberate falsehoods, that devout Christians have grandly declared to be the unalterable Word of the Ever Living One called YHVH for nearly 2000 years, will have been carefully excised. Will those quaint biblical passages about the boiling and eating of sons, and the eating of dung

which cometh out of man, and babies coming out red all over like a hairy garment, be included in the new shorter Revised Standard Edition? Not bloody likely! And you can bet the farm on that. (I chuckle to think of how Luther and Calvin would react to this, the newest revised edition, of all those other revised editions. How deliciously ironic it all seems to be . . .)

Needless to say, the practice of carefully revising religious history for the purpose of creating a better image isn't a Christian conception. It is instead just another example of what is par for the course for orthodoxy, regardless of the faith involved. All religions like to sweep their theological horrors beneath the rug of the past, as it were, and then pretend that the "sweet religious benevolence" of the *new era* always existed. (That's how the Christians must have behaved when they stopped burning witches. "Hey guys, let's pretend it all never happened. We've always been jolly good fellows. Right?") Not unexpectedly, certain notable evangelical Christians were quick to express their delight with the Reader's Digest mini-version of the Revised Standard Edition version of all those other versions, since this text was designed to keep the "general flow" of biblical fantasy going, while serving to elevate the "Word of God" a little farther out of the primitive, cruel and superstitious dungeon in which it was spawned. (Another hundred years of this kind of refinement, and the Scriptures that are left can be given a new title: "The Bobbsey Twins Visit The Holy Land.")

In fact, with the passage of time, the increase of sophistication, and the rejection of organized religion by more and more people, modern theologians are trying with ever-increasing desperation to justify some of the more repulsive or troublesome aspects of the Christian and Jewish faiths. The venomous fear of and hatred for women that is so deeply rooted in the traditions of both religions is one of the most contentious and disturbing problems the scholastic theologian faces. The Book of Esther is another. Often called the most embarrassing book of the Bible, Esther makes no reference to the Jewish God, to the practices and beliefs of Judaism, to the national history of the Jewish people or to its ethnic concerns, with the sole exception of their resistance to a proposed Holocaust planned by a 5th century B.C. Persian prime minister named Haman. The story says the Jewish population was rescued from annihilation by winning the right to slaughter their enemies, including women and children. Apologists like to suggest that this "vindictive spirit" is at odds with the ethical teaching of both Old and New Testaments. Really? Just how, I wonder, does this vindictive spirit differ from all the other acts of vengeance engaged in by Moses and Joshua and countless others? And what of the vindictive spirit displayed at times in the utterances and actions of the Christian savior-god, Jesus? And so it goes: a never-ending round of apologetics as anxious biblicists attempt to ameliorate the structuralism of their orthodoxy.

Turning once again to the Christian commitment to left-wing socialism in various parts of the world, the Catholic Church itself leaves much to be desired when it comes to defending the politico-economic system of the West. One need only read the Encyclical "*Populorum Progressio*" ("On the Development of Peoples") by Pope Paul VI to see that the Vatican finds shopworn Marxism more attractive than successful capitalism. As a manifesto of hatred for free enterprise, the encyclical does not discuss or con-

demn any social system other than capitalism. In a world hobbled by communist and fascist totalitarianism, this blindness can hardly be accidental.

In the 4th century, Saint Ambrose said that private property did not constitute for any an absolute and unconditional right. No one is justified in keeping what he does not need. When you give your possessions to the poor person, you are merely handing over to him what is his. Following in the intellectual footsteps of the sainted Ambrose, Pope Paul states that all rights are to be subordinated to the principle that *everything* that the earth contains belongs to *every* human being and people. The superfluous wealth of the rich should be placed at the service of the poor. Free trade among unequally developed countries is "unjust." The contrary effects of work, continues the encyclical, is that it promises money, power and pleasure, and motivates selfishness and greed in some people. The "cult of one's own person," must be vigorously combatted, states the Pope. This is a naked attack on individualism—by the principles of which the United States was created. (The Christian Establishment has always railed against the "pernicious" philosophy of individualism: "This Church is essentially a society comprising two categories of persons: pastors and flock; and these categories are so distinct in themselves that in the pastoral body alone reside the necessary right and authority to guide and direct all of the members toward the goal of the society. As for the multitude, it has no other right than that of allowing itself to be led, and, as a docile flock, to follow its shepherds." Pius X, in *Vehementer Nos*. "Liberty is today's major plague." Fr. Hunter Guthrie, S. J., head of a Jesuit university.)

In simpler terms, the encyclical is telling us that productive people should intensify their labors, reduce their living standard to the barest subsistence, and hand over the products of their work to helplessly unprogressive savages in other parts of the world.

Since the encyclical favors public ownership of the creative mind, it isn't accidental that the French Communist party described it as being "constructive for highlighting the evils of capitalism long emphasized by Marxists."

Despite the efforts of the Vatican, Christianity finally progressed out of the Dark Ages and moved toward a more open society. But Communism is standing still; and it may stand still for a long time to come. The equalitarian ("brotherhood of man") doctrine preached by Christians is pernicious because it can be a threat to individual freedom. But at least the Christians are in no position to enforce it with armed might. The notion of equality as preached, *and brutally enforced*, by the religion of Communism, can only lead ultimately to more horrors like Jonestown, or to other fanatically homogeneous horrors—or even to another Dark Age. (Egalitarianism means that all humans must be leveled down to the least common denominator of competence among humans. Marxian egalitarianism teaches that "Only in the classless society can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be fully left behind and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.")

"We cannot foresee, we can hardly even guess, the new forms into which thought and society will run in the future . . ." says James George Frazer. "Whatever comes of it, wherever it leads, we must follow the truth alone. It is our guiding star."

We can at least *hope*, however, that some day the world will develop into a mostly civilized place inhabited by emotionally mature individuals who are established in their own souls—*a world in which there will be no place for the bibles and the gods of small cults—either Christian, Jewish, or Marxist.*

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

The Unholy Bible

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God . . .
(II Timothy 3:16.)

That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord.
(II Corinthians 11:17.)

After an extensive and lengthy examination of this immense volume of miscellaneous character known as The Bible, what then do we have?

On the far side of the fence, to be sure, we have legions of ardent advocates of biblicism who seem to respect no limits when it comes to raving about the virtues and the values of the volume of books that they call "The Good Book."

On this side of the fence, where a clutch of busybodies stubbornly adheres to the principle that dogma must not be allowed to rule history, we have unearthed a veritable plethora of Bibles, including Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Aramaic, Egyptian, Armenian, and English . . . a seemingly endless production line of Bibles stretching back over the centuries . . . Bibles that have been scribbled, rescribbled, reinterpreted, reslanted, rehashed and revised . . . with the end product (the highest literary level was reached with the development of the King James Authorized Version and its Revised Version) being a far more unique and different achievement than the earliest compilers of biblical material could even have envisioned in their most ecstatic moments of contemplation.

Assuming for a moment that there really was a Jesus of the Gospels, take as an example the statement he supposedly made to Judas. It reads as follows in the Scriptures: "Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial. The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me . . ." Presumably, these words were first uttered in Aramaic (or perhaps in the language that became known as Hebrew), after which they traversed a long, tortuous road down the centuries through Greek, Latin and eventually archaic English. (Hebrew wasn't the ancestral language of the Jews but one they adopted. Since Abraham and his clan are said to have originated in Ur of the Chaldees in S. Mesopotamia, they may have spoken Akkadian.) For those naive enough to suggest that nothing has been lost—or added—in translation, a quote from Proverbs might be relevant: "A fool should be answered according to his folly."

The philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, was never impressed with the

German translations of the Bible that were available to him. To understand the Old Testament, "one should read it in the Greek version," he advised. "There it has an entirely different tone, and an entirely different color, with no presentiment of Christianity." Schopenhauer compared Luther's German translation with the Greek and found it "pious" and "often erroneous," and in many cases containing changes "which one could call forgeries."

Turning to a scholar as deeply pessimistic as Schopenhauer (he taught that life is an evil to be cured only by overcoming the will to live) for an analysis of biblical worth will find little favor with the Christian Establishment. In the area of criticism with which we are dealing, however, logic and objective analysis appear to support his skepticism. It is a fairly safe assumption (nearly axiomatic, I would think) that essentially the same critique could be directed against any translation of the Bible that exists anywhere in the world today.

We know now that some parts of the Old Testament may have been written down as far back as 1200 B.C.—over 3000 years ago. Several biblical textual traditions existed in pre-Christian centuries. One may have had its home in Babylonia, another in Palestine, and a third in Egypt. Approximately one-fourth of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which date back at least as far as the 2nd century B.C., are copies of the text of the Hebrew Scriptures; and these scrolls indicate a virtual rewrite of Old Testament material for the sake of stressing theological interpretations, worship practices and legal regulations, among other things. Depending on what was dearest to the interpreter's heart, he could always paraphrase, or omit objectionable material, or supplement with new data, or exaggerate for the purpose of making the events or the people in question look far greater than they were.

The radical differences between the scrolls and the Version of the 70 (the Greek translation made in Egypt between 250 and 100 B.C.) and the curious Masoretic text which appeared in the vicinity of A.D. 100, indicate that the Greek translators exercised great freedom in handling the Hebrew material they used—and that was around 2000 years ago. Just imagine the extent of the exercise of freedom during the centuries to follow.

To cite but two of the oldest biblical manuscripts available to us, the *Vaticanus* and *Sinaiticus,* these redactions date from some time in the 4th century and they are filled with the various corrections and rearrangements of detail made by the various churches in the text as they knew it, and all the work of revision, emendation and adjustment, accomplished during the 3rd and 4th centuries in the great Christian schools of Alexandria, Palestinian Caesarea, and Antioch. It should not be necessary to point out that those venerable exegetes were more skilled at forging the demands of their faith than they were at adhering to the strict principles of textual reproduction. This is not meant to imply that the Christians were beating a path through virgin territory. Instead, they were just walking in the moccasins of their predecessors. The Old Testament is a monument to the art of substituting edifying legend for historical reality.

Before they mixed with other people the Hebrews were desert dwelling Arabs. They ate goat meat, they drank camel milk and they were ferocious, warlike and merciless. They worshiped numerous gods, and if their religious life was blessed with a divine mother, she was the goddess of a moon-cult.

This is the kind of world that eventually produced Solomon.

The modern beliefs that Solomon had a thousand wives, that he was among the wisest men in the world, and that he built the world's greatest temple, are merely the products of a most child-like variety of wishful thinking.

Compared to the great monuments of Egypt and Chaldea, the primitive and limited architectural efforts of the desert-born Solomon couldn't have resulted in much more than a shabby little edifice at best, probably composed of mud-bricks. Far from being worldly wise, he probably couldn't even read or write. As to the myth of the thousand wives, if he had twenty-five or thirty girls who were either bought or stolen from their shepherd fathers he was lucky.

How did the Solomon story grow to be so much larger than life? Like most of the almost endless parade of exaggerations in the Old Testament, it isn't difficult to explain.

During the centuries that followed the death of Solomon (or whoever the character was patterned after) each chronicler who worked on his story sought to make him appear greater and wiser and more respected than the previous storyteller. When all the revisions were completed, the Solomon we know emerged as nothing more than a manufactured product of his biographers. We know nothing at all of the real Solomon—if such a person ever indeed existed. (Historians are doing much the same thing today. To a lesser degree, the biographers of Franklin D. Roosevelt have strained the truth and even lied in order to make FDR appear to be a far greater man than the child-like egomaniac he really was. The coven of communists who surrounded him used to brag about how easily they could plant their own ideas in his mind in such a way that he soon came to think of them as his own.)

For fifteen hundred years Christians have lived with the orthodox falsehood that Jesus was crucified with nails driven through the hands. (Few people today are aware of the fact that for at least the first five centuries Christians were repulsed by the idea of representing their savior-god to the world as a tortured body fastened to an instrument of punishment.) We know now that nailed hands would not support the weight of the body. The wrists or the forearms would have to be nailed instead. By the time the broadgauge thinkers of the Church finally decided that the cross of death should become the chief symbol of their faith and stamped upon all nature and all art—with the whole Christian world singing *of* the cross of torture and glorying *in* the cross of death—history may have closed over the true method of crucifixion. But regardless of whether or not they knew the truth, apparently it was essential to them that the hands be nailed, since that would fulfill an Old Testament "prophecy" in which the hands and feet were "pierced."

Before continuing, there are at least two more crucifixion legends that should be whittled down to size. The claim that Jesus labored beneath the weight of the entire cross is just another Christian falsehood. The main beam or post would be at the crucifixion site. The victim would drag or carry only the horizontal beam. And it may very well be that *nailed* crucifixions occurred less often than we have been led to believe. Over all of the years that explorers and archeologists have been searching for evidence of the past, the remains of but a *single* body have been found showing the physical evidence of this type of crucifixion. In 1968, the skeleton of a man named

Yehohanan (his name was inscribed in Aramaic on the coffin) was found in a stone casket at Giv'at ha-Mivtar in Jerusalem. The remains proved to be at least 2000 years old; and seven-inch nails were driven through the forearms and heelbones.

But what of the cross itself? Why, after five hundred years, did the Christians finally clasp it to their bosoms, as it were?

No big mystery.

In all of its shapes and sizes, the cross has always been a significant symbol; but the Christian cross, draped as it usually is with a tortured body, is one of the most gripping symbols imaginable. The choice of the cross of torture and death as the principal Christian emblem evolved out of a remarkably auspicious blend of dramatic instinct and psychological insight.

The message radiating from this symbol is unmistakable: *To demonstrate his love for mankind, the wonderful and loving Son of God died a terrible human death.*

But what if the cross had been ignored and the fish had remained the emblem of the Christian faith? Where is the powerful psychological appeal? Where is the incredible drama? ("Holy mackerel, brothers and sisters! We are the little fishes of our big fish, Jesus Christ!" Get the point?) In other words, theatrics, or dramaturgy, or melodrama (take your pick), is more often than not the name of the theological game. The entire crucifixion ritual, for example, in all of its gory glory, is little more than a carefully staged theatrical product designed to entice and to hold the "simple faithful"—a morbidly conceived melodrama rooted more in the myths of the past than in the realities of the past.

But back, once again, to the business at hand (such as it is).

Let us turn now to another biblical statement: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." No one on earth knows who placed these words in the Christian Bible. Of one thing, however, the objective scholar can be absolutely sure: *No Jew would ever have written it that way*. The whole history of the people of Israel is a history of the struggle to make the Jews into a people of an exclusive religion—an exclusive racial-religious people. If ever a religious Word or Faith was "belched out of the bowels" of a people, it is the *totally Semitic* religion of Judaism. Observe how well it has served the Jews in the past: the Old Testament is filled with the exploits of a racially obsessed people; and consider how well it serves them today: Amnon Rubenstein, a critic of the authoritarian Israeli political system, charged—as late as 1973—that the people of the world are aware of the racially obsessive activities of Israel, because they can "read about the governmental threat to expel Christians; about a ministerial committee meeting in order to decide how to fight the 'Jews for Jesus' . . . they hear about the Prime Minister speaking all day long against 'mixed weddings,' that the Israeli law defines the citizenship rights according to the test of the grandfather and grandmother, and that the Chief Rabbi declares that the rules of justice and equality do not apply to gentiles . . ." (Because of Zionist power and intimidation, few Americans are aware that these views prevail in 20th century Israel.)

With equally sharp words, Doctor Israel Shahak, another Israeli critic, condemns Jewish racism: "The Israelis have resuscitated a book in Spanish dating from the 14th century which is used as a manual of religious instruc-

tion in secondary schools. It explains why non-Jews ought to be the slaves of Jews 'because Jews are the elite of the human race and were specially created to give homage to the creator. Because of this, they deserve to have slaves, and these must be non-Jews, because a Jewish slave could not devote himself entirely to God.'"

The predominant aim of the prophets and their followers was to strive for the dogma of a chosen and exclusive people and the sole God who should belong solely to Israel.

Just as it was true 3000 years ago, it is true today.

Since the Hebrews were a nomadic people for so long (like the Gypsy tribalists who roam the world today), the chances of any of their neighbors being at any particular time part of an established Jewish state or province were practically non-existent. The Jews might logically have said, therefore, "Love thy Jewish neighbor as thyself," meaning the members of other Jewish tribes; or they might have said, "Love thy racial kinsman as thyself"; but never would they have said, "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

Take as another example the passage in Isaiah (26:4) which reads: "Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength."

Today, the devout Christian believer repeats these words to himself with all the faith he can muster, firmly convinced that he is in touch with the actual words of God. In truth, though, he not only isn't in touch with the words of a God, he isn't even in touch with the words of Isaiah. He is instead merely repeating the majestic and poetic words of the brilliant authors of the King James Version of the Bible. (If biblical poetry *is* "unsurpassed in any literature," how much of the poetic beauty and majesty and striking power found in *some* passages of the English Bible are the products of the English translators who lived and worked in one of the greatest periods of English literature—the era of Shakespeare, Spenser, Bacon, Raleigh, *et al.*? Consider, for instance, part of a passage in Ecclesiastes: "The lips of a fool will swallow up himself." These words were undoubtedly composed by a great English poet.) We have already examined the origins of the word *Jehovah*—an expression that the original author or authors of Isaiah could never have used. Only after a 16th century Christian monk created the Godly title Jehovah did the Christians become preoccupied with it and begin using it at every opportunity.

Finally, it's interesting to observe what happened to the name the Hebrews pronounced *Chawwah*. After a lengthy transmittal through Akkadian and/or Aramaic and Greek and Latin and French and various forms of English from archaic to modern, it wound up as the name that we pronounce *Eve*. (It must have been a rough trip.)

Psychologists tell us that religions are rooted in the fear of death . . . in the fear of the unknown . . . and that they are invented from the unconscious to make terror and loneliness and uncertainty tolerable. It follows just as surely as night follows day, then, that religions are beneficial to politicians and rulers and power-seeking theologians. People enslaved by superstition and deceived by mysticism are more easily governed or held in bondage. Superstition, fear and trickery have always been high on the list of tools employed by the successful ruler. Polybius said it centuries ago when he accused the Romans of using mysterious terrors and scenic effects as a check

upon the common people. Josif Dzhugashvili, who christened himself Steel (Stalin), lived it in the 20th century. "There is nothing so easy as by sheer volubility to deceive a common crowd or an uneducated congregation," scoffed Jerome.

But from whence does the monstrous and incredible "authority" of religion come? What makes a Bible *holy* . . . or a Church *infallible* . . . or a Pope the *vicar* of God on earth . . . or a dogma *irrefutable*? Why should anyone believe that Jesus the Christ is "the image of the invisible God who died for our sins and rose again from the death" . . . or that Jesus the Son was actually the result of God reproducing Himself, thereby making man "eligible for full-fledged sonship in His God-plane family" . . . or that God "revealed Himself, by His creation, by His patriarchs and prophets, and by the ministry of Jesus Christ" . . . or that "Jesus Christ is the very God of the Old Testament—the Ever-living One called YHVH, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" . . . or that God is revealed in the Bible and the Bible is the Word of God?

All the power and the authority of religion (in this case, the Christian Church) come from God, the leaders of the Church tell us; and since they are the officials of the living Church, *their* authority comes from God. How do we know? The sacred writings tell us so. Why should we believe the Scriptures? All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. How do we know? The human writers of the Scriptures were inspired by God. How do we know? The Church tells us so. How does the Church know? Once again, because of the sacred writings, which would not have been *canonized* without proper rules or standards. So what does that mean?

The English word "canonicity" is an anglicized derivative of the Greek term Kanon, meaning a "rod" or "ruler." A churchly Canon, then, embraces the general rule of moral and religious duty along with the sacred books and writings that could be called genuine or inspired. (A *codex,* on the other hand, is a collection of canons. Hundreds of fragments of papyrus relating to biblical writings have been found, along with numerous *codices*—manuscripts on parchment in uncial characters—of the Bible, and hundreds of manuscripts known as *cursives,* written in a small running hand—some on parchment, later on paper—as well as many large portions of later versions of the New Testament.)

And what proper rules or standards were used in determining the final canonicity of the so-called "sacred writings"?

There were several, it seems, including inspiration, internal evidence (some books of the Bible internally assert or imply themselves or other canonical books to be of divine origin), previous official public action, and the recognition of previous canonizations (e.g., Moses).

Next we have the two biblical testaments, the Old and the New. The New verifies with the statements and actions of Jesus certain events in the Old, according to Christian interpretation. For instance, Jesus was for three days and three nights "in the heart of the earth" because Jonah was for three days and three nights in the whale's belly. In similar fashion we have the Old Testament validating the events in the New Testament with numerous statements called *prophetic*, such as the one about the virgin birth.

Around 3250 years ago (give or take a fair share of years, no doubt)

Moses supposedly said to the Israelites, "God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up." To the Christians, the appearance of Jesus the Christ represents a prophetic fulfillment of that statement. Jesus came to earth to make salvation possible for mankind, as the Christians explain it, and the Old Testament points to this Jesus called the Christ, because of the failure of humanity to follow God as it should, which in turn demonstrates the need of Christ and his forgiveness. With this pointing to Christ by Moses—as loosely and beneficially interpreted by Christians—a pattern of predictive prophecy supposedly runs continuously (and conveniently) through the threads of the Old Testament: "Jesus Christ is the tie that binds the Old and New Testaments together," proclaim the Christians.

In the New Testament, on the other hand, we are supposed to see God's fulfillment of his promise to bring forgiveness and reconciliation. And does Jesus return the favor and give his stamp of approval to the Old Testament? You bet your Revised Standard Version, he does. "These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you," he states in Luke, "and everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled." Jesus presupposed and reaffirmed the validity and the enduring worth of Old Testament teaching—and he even indicated that his own coming and work were the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. And *after* his resurrection, wonder of wonders, he "miraculously" affirms that the Old Testament foreshadowed and illumined his death and ascension from the grave. Or to put it another way, the Evangelists didn't miss a trick when it came to validating both the existence and the amazing rebirth of their savior-god.

The New Testament is further corroborated by apostolicity, we are told. Every book in the New Testament was written by an apostle or by someone who was closely associated with an apostle, or so the story goes. And thus we find (surprise, surprise) Mark, described as the companion and interpreter of Peter, committing to writing in Rome the Gospel as Peter habitually proclaimed it. And we have Luke writing in two books—Luke and Acts—about the beginnings of Christianity from the birth of John the Baptist up to Paul's residence in Rome.

And around and around it goes; and where it stops, everybody knows. It stops at the most magical of all words—the word that moves mountains of doubt: *faith*. The entire credibility of the Christian Church rests not upon scientific knowledge or objective evidence or even sensible speculation, but upon the single word faith. What is it? The substance of things hoped for? Is it the means we use to convince ourselves that what we would like to be true, is true? Or does it involve believing what one's reason labors in vain to justify?

You must have faith; then you will be a true believer.

If for a moment we look at that great area of speculation in the Christian-Judaic belief concerning the Fall of Man, we find it to be an intrinsic part of the Christian canon as the hopeful concept of man's final redemption. And what is the solitary basis of that redemption? *Faith in God*.

"We believe in order that we may know. We do not know in order that we may believe," declared Saint Augustine. "Faith, then, is to believe what you do not see, while truth is to see what you have already believed."

"Some Christians will not so much as give or accept any account of what they believe," complained Celsus. "They adhere to the watchwords, 'Prove not, only believe,' and 'Thy faith shall save thee.' Wisdom is an evil thing . . ."

A very noteworthy Christian Father named Tertullian preached that religion, by its very nature, "required the active subversion of reason—the belief in the irrational because it is irrational . . . belief is the primary fact. There is nothing further . . . to be ignorant of everything outside the rule of faith is to possess all knowledge . . ."

In the name of faith then, man must deny everything his reason tells him and accept the doctrines, the ceremonies, the extravagant claims and the insoluble theological mysteries concocted by that powerful group of elitists, the "divinely chosen" group known as the "clergy," the authoritarian rulers who decide what comprises the "Church."

Blind faith is the name of the game—a game in which the individual is seen as nothing more than a unit in a unified universe.

To any logical-minded, intelligent human being who is strong enough to reject the powerful urge to believe just for the sake of believing—strong enough to question the rumor of God and call the bluff of hell—there is no legitimate authority underlying the claims of the Church: its doctrines, its hierarchy, *or* its "sacred writings." The magical force of "authority"—all of it—comes from man and man alone. And the arrogance of the men of the Church who profess to believe that their authority is sanctioned by a claim to supernatural knowledge and that they have the right to dictate the rules that control people's lives is an affront to the dignity of mankind.

The powerful elitists who establish a religious faith, along with the countless dedicated servants (both men and women) of that Authority who follow, are solely responsible for the success of an organized, militant, proselytizing church. Certainly there is nothing "divine" about the building of a faith. There isn't even any similarity between what organized religions teach and the simplistic beliefs of their alleged founders, Jesus, Buddha, *et al.* And there certainly isn't anything democratic about any church on the face of the earth. Religious officials are chosen from within their own ranks by their fellow elitists (the way the Pope is chosen from within the ranks of the College of Cardinals), and not by the "simple faithful" exercising their voting preferences. Even though human pressure can eventually cause long-established doctrines to be moderated, there are no "proposition 13's" within any church structure known to man. One of the reasons for the Christian success was the tightly organized, hierarchical structure, eminently suited to their needs, which the Christians were able to establish in the face of much dissension within their ranks. As time went on, the powerfully effective force known as "tradition" gave additional weight to Christendom.

But, objects the true believer, how could the Church be rooted in anything false? The whole world couldn't be fooled. The very fact that so many people accept and believe in a faith *proves* its validity. (The philosopher Herbert Spencer used a similar argument in defense of religion: "Any world-wide belief persistently entertained through ages may be held to have a basis of fact.") In other words, claims the believer, the Church could never live so great a lie!

The fact remains, however, that in at least one very obvious arena of methodology the Christian Church has lived a tissue of lies. It has been truthfully said that "All tyranny rests on fraud." And much of the tyranny of the Christian Church rests on fraud—*on the deliberate duplicity of the framers of orthodox thought and their countless forgeries.*

In an all-out effort to win their case against the philosophical and theological arguments of paganism, the Christians deceived, lied and consciously forged documents. They were thoroughly involved in creating the deliberate and unscrupulous forgery of a whole literature. The aims, of course, are clear enough. They wished to contribute to the development of Christianity as a whole or to some particular class of tenets. To these ends, they mobilized their efforts.

Dedicated forgery continued for nearly all of the early centuries of the Christian experience. In all things religious, the end justified the means: a lie was acceptable in a worthy cause . . . the force of deceit was praised . . . the promotion of a cause with a lie was virtuous . . . and everywhere a rather remarkable parallel with the modern efforts of the theologians of Communism can be seen. *A fanatical rightness of a cause invariably finds itself employing the same methods and practices.*

As surprising as it may seem, the most eminent Fathers of the Church devoutly believed that pious frauds were justifiable and even laudable. "Great is the force of deceit provided it is not excited by a treacherous intention," said Chrysostom. (I may be a liar and a cheat, but my intentions are good, cha, cha, cha.) Eusebius, the Bishop of Caesarea, candidly avowed that he would omit in his historical works whatever might tend to discredit the Church, and he would magnify whatever might contribute to the glory of the Church. "It was admitted and avowed," writes Dean Milman, "that to deceive into Christianity was so valuable a service as to hallow deceit itself."

As late as the 4th century the most learned doctors of the Christian system were, almost without exception, disposed to deceive and lie wherever they found it to be in the interest of the religion to do so. In order to vindicate the uniqueness of Jesus they forged countless letters purported to have been written by him, by his mother, or by Joseph or by the apostles. They forged letters that were supposed to have been written between Seneca and Paul, with some of the expressions borrowed from Tacitus. (There is no evidence that Seneca ever heard of Jesus or Paul.) They even forged letters in the name of Tiberius and in the name of the Roman senate.

Along with the substitution of false documents and the tampering with genuine ones, the forging of papal letters was even more frequent in the Middle Ages than in the earlier centuries of the Church. In 1198, Pope Innocent III indicated nine species of forgery which had come to his attention and he charged that "forgery and interpolations as well as ignorance had wrought mischief on a great scale." It is not unlikely that the second decretals of Isidore were among the pseudodoxal works indicted by the Pope, since they made their appearance virtually on the eve of the Middle Ages. This collection of authoritative decrees, canons and letters was brought into circulation in the 9th century and attributed to Isidorus Hispalensis, Bishop of Seville, in the 7th century. The decretals proved to be a "series of impudent forgeries, supporting the pretensions of the Pope and the bishops."

At least one of the more notable early Christians was disturbed by the nearly orthodox attitude that as long as there was a *justa causa,* an untruth need not be a lie. Jerome, a 4th century Latin father of the Church, complained bitterly about the so-called "proofs" that were used in the writings of Paul against the Jews and against other heretics—passages which contained different meanings in their own contexts than those which were demonstrated in Paul's Epistles. Many of the passages "taken captive" by the pen of Paul and "pressed into service to win victories," Jerome charged, had no controversial bearing at all in the volumes from which they were taken. (With what are we really left when the *creed* upon which a church must rest is rooted in *lies*? What are we to think of an *end* which is achieved by such unholy means? And can we really believe that a church which stands convicted of either forging or making use of forged books would have any scruples about forging its *miracles* or even its *Gospels*?)

Admittedly, all could never be deliberate conspirators. Many of the people involved were devout and idealistic believers. A religion could never survive without the vast majority who devoutly believe in and blindly support the faith. It is safe to assume, too, that there must have been many times when it was difficult for them to draw a clear distinction between history and legend. But rationalization is one of the most powerful ameliorating forces in the psychological armory. And even the most sincere believer can probably convince himself at times that he should selectively distort or affirmatively misrepresent for what he would consider to be the greater good of the church. In this connection, a confession by the Bishop of Ravenna in the 9th century provides a rather candid explanation of how history was *composed* in the monasteries: "Where I have not found any history of these bishops, and have not been able by conversation with aged men, or inspection of monuments, or from any other authentic source, to obtain information concerning them, in such case, in order that there might not be a break in the series, I have composed the life myself, with the help of God and the prayers of the brethren."

For the objective, courageous thinker, the "authority" of the Church—any church—rests on fraudulent claims, wishful thinking, superstitious motivations and fear. By the same token, the "authority" of its "sacred writings" is equally fraudulent. There is no such thing as a *holy* Bible. Indeed, all Bibles, Talmuds, Korans, Vedas and Puranas are *unholy* because of the very deceptions on which they rest.

And perhaps the least holy Bible of them all is the Christian-Judaic Bible.

In delving into the murky and busy depths of our Bible, we have barely scratched the surface. There are people and events and creatures and activities and exaggerations and contradictions and hanky-panky, and heaven alone knows what all, that we haven't even touched upon.

There are laws dealing with bestiality, sodomy and incest, written in a most descriptive manner. There are references to parturition, menstruation, conception, begetting, harlotry, fornication (including the curious obsession with "fornication" on the part of Saint John the Divine in the book of Revelation), belly, womb, and babies coming out red all over like a hairy garment, and even *pissing*. There are stories about polygamy and incest and pimping and prostitution and concubinage and indecent exposure and threats

to corrupt the sexual seed of males; and just so nothing is left out—*cannibalism* (II Kings 6:29). There are scatological references about cooking bread with dung which cometh out of man, and eating dung, and spreading dung upon faces, and the holy exposure of none other than God's backparts. There are sexual mutilations such as circumcision and castration, and the providing of emerods (hemorrhoidal tubercles about the anus) to the Lord as a trespass offering (Voltaire refers to them as golden anuses), and King Saul asking for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines in return for the hand of his daughter Michal (Voltaire supposes that they were sent as a necklace to the bride).

There is no end of promiscuous slaughter . . . with the "consuming" God *utterly consuming all things* from off the face of the ground including man and beast and the birds of the heavens and the fishes of the sea; and because of the "tempest of Yahweh," yea, a whirling tempest bursting forth upon the head of the wicked *until he have* (sic) *performed the intents of his heart*. There are countless fascinating characters . . . Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, for instance, the Three Stooges of the Book of Daniel; and the comely Tirzah whose nose is described as being like the Tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus. (I wonder if she was a singer.) There are strange apparitions . . . like the Son of Man with hair like wool and white as snow and eyes like a flame of fire and feet like unto fine brass and a voice with the sound of many waters and a countenance like the sun, and with a sharp two-edged sword in his mouth. There are remarkable exaggerations . . . like Moses addressing 600,000 men in front of a tent twenty-two feet wide; and three million people—"all the congregation"—stoning a man to death. There are wondrous animals and marvelous creatures . . . like a God who hisses for the flies in Egypt and the bees in Assyria; and cockatrices (serpents hatched from the egg of a cock), dancing satyrs, fiery serpents, winged serpents, hallelujah dragons, holy beasts and creatures with four faces and four wings and bodies full of eyes round about. There are death threats and curses galore . . . like the curses for those who speak evil of the Jewish God: Let his days be few; let his children be fatherless; let his wife be a widow; let his children be vagabonds and beggars, seeking bread in desolate places; and let there be none to extend mercy unto them. HAPPY SHALL HE BE THAT TAKETH AND DASHETH THY LITTLE ONES AGAINST THE STONES!

Modern Christians prefer to allegorize these curses and death threats into safe and sound nothingness. (That cool and scholarly customer Celsus, a Roman by birth and a pagan by inclination, commented along these very lines about the flagrant allegorizing of the Christians. "Their explanations," he charged, "were even less plausible than the matters explained.") But consider the people in the book of Numbers who are consumed by fire for complaining; or the priests in the book of Leviticus who are burned alive for using the wrong sort of fire. What are these things figurative of, except of agony of either mind or body?

And, as mentioned earlier, wherever we look in the unholy Bible we find generous servings of hanky-panky . . . such as Abraham passing his wife off as his sister so the Pharaoh will take her to the royal palace in return for a lot of nice gifts (an *old* low in the art of pimping); a drunken Noah

exposing himself; Lot offering his daughters to a mob of Sodomites; Isaac repeating Abraham's trick and passing his wife off as his sister; Reuben committing incest with his father's concubine; Judah having sons by his daughter-in-law, Tamar; Lot's daughters getting him drunk and seducing him so that they may preserve the seed of their father; Abraham marrying his father's daughter; Amram, the father of Moses, marrying his aunt; and on and on, *ad nauseam*.

Perhaps a bit more should be said about those fine-formed and earthy biblical females—the ladies that Christian Establishmentarians grandly refer to when they tell us how enormously significant they were in the Old Testament and how their influence contributed so much to the Christianization of the Western world.

Only two women, Ruth and Esther, were significant enough to have biblical books named after them.

Let us begin with the gentle Ruth.

After the death of her husband, Ruth develops a yen for one of her mother-in-law's kindred, one Boaz, so she washes and anoints herself and sneaks into his domicile and asks him to cover her with his skirt. (There is some additional significance attached to this request since they wore very loose apparel in those days.) Comes the dawn and off she goes with stealth and secrecy, and somewhat better off, to boot, since Boaz has provided her with a little going-away present. (So what did you expect: Romeo and Juliet?)

Before being elevated into the Old Testament Hall of Fame as one of the legendary saviors of the Jewish people, Esther, "the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai," prostituted herself to a hoary old reprobate known as King Ahasuerus. She was among the virginal maidens who were chosen and then conditioned with a full year of purification accomplished with cleansing and oil of myrrh and sweet odors, "and with *other* things for the purifying of women." (Now whatever on earth does that mean?) After being prepared in the Royal Emporium of Beauty, she was presented to Ahasuerus in the month of Tebeth; in the seventh year of his reign, and he was so taken with her, he promptly replaced his queen Vashti with Esther. (The universality of this scenario shouldn't be difficult to grasp.)

Zipporah may be somewhat significant because of her involvement to one degree or another with that covenant of the Jewish God known as circumcision. In order to restrain the Lord from killing Moses (apparently he wasn't identifiable as a Jew because he had not been circumcised), Zipporah takes a sharp stone and cuts off the foreskin of her son and casts it at the feet of Moses with the words, "Surely a bloody husband art thou to me." So the Lord forgives Moses and lets him live. (How could He resist an appeal like that?) Dinah, the daughter of Leah, who was the unbargained-for and unwanted wife of Jacob, was raped by Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite. "He took her, and lay with her, and defiled her." Beyond this rather salient point, there isn't a great deal to say about the tragic saga of Dinah.

Moving right along on our tour of biblical femininity, we come to the wife of Heber the Kenite, Jael, who took a nail of the tent and a hammer in her hand and went softly unto her husband while he was asleep and weary, and smote the nail into his temples and fastened it into the ground. She wasn't crazy about Sisera, either; so she took a workman's hammer and

smote off his head. Heber and Sisera were the enemies of the Jewish God, you see.

Leah and Rachel are the tender-eyed and beautiful daughters of Laban. Jacob, an Old Testament patriarch, falls for Rachel, and promises for her hand seven years of servitude to her father. Instead of Rachel, Laban brings him Leah, the other daughter, when the seven years are up, and Jacob "goes in unto her"—as the biblical saying quaintly goes. But it must have been pretty dark at the time because he doesn't know that he has been beguiled with the wrong daughter until morning. He lucks out, though, because Laban gives him Rachel to take as a wife also. But they don't all live happily ever after. Leah is fecund, you see, and Rachel is sterile. Since Rachel can't have children, she prevails upon Jacob to go in unto Bilhah, her handmaid, so that Jacob can have a son. When Leah can no longer bear children, she prevails upon Jacob to go in unto Zilpah, her handmaid, so he can have more children. (Lucky Jacob.) Finally, Rachel bribes her sister Leah with the sweat of her (Leah's) son's labor for the privilege of having sexual intercourse with her own husband. (I'll leave you to figure that one out.)

Speaking once again of Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah who played the harlot with Judah, as you may recall, she was the wife of Er, the firstborn of Judah. Now Onan was the son of Judah's wife, Shuah. Since, for some reason (nobody seems to know why), the Jewish God was unhappy with Er, He slays him. Whereupon Judah advises his son Onan to take his late brother Er's wife and go in unto her. But Onan is apparently disturbed by the thought, so when he goes in unto Tamar, he withdraws in time to spill his seed on the ground. This is the nefarious act that provided the Christians with the word *onanism*—which they promptly misinterpreted to describe masturbation. Obviously, it refers to *coitus interruptus*.

Bathsheba should be a familiar character to all and sundry, considering the popularity of the film about David and Bathsheba. It seems that King David spied Bathsheba one day when she was cleansing herself, and he liked what he saw so much that he had her soldier husband, Uriah, moved into the front lines of a battle so he would be killed and David could make a move on Bathsheba. Everything works out as planned except for God's displeasure because of David's underhanded method of eliminating Uriah. But that blows over in a hurry. In time, Bathsheba loses her charm and beauty, and in true biblical tradition has to stand by while a young virgin (her name is Abishag) is provided to lie on the king's bosom and give him heat; i.e., arouse in him a spark of sexual desire. According to the biblical narrative, it didn't work. (There are times when even the most tempting morsel will not stimulate the appetite, worse luck.)

While we are on the subject of King David, the son of the Ephrathite of Bethelehem-judah, a passage in the first book of Samuel (25:22) is of more than passing interest and should be noted: "So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall."

At least one thing is clear in this passage. The Jewish King is talking about males. (Who else pisseth against walls?)

The intriguing Song of Solomon deserves some attention because of erotic utterances stemming from a rather intense concentration on womanly fea-

tures and virtues. Curiously, these passionate love poems have some rather unusual captions in the King James Bible: "The Church and Christ Congratulate One Another" . . . "The Church's Fight and Victory in Temptation" . . . "Christ Setteth Forth the Graces of the Church" . . . "The Church having a Taste of Christ's Love is Sick of Love" . . . to cite but a few of them. And here, in examples both captivating and titillating, are some of "the graces of the Church" along with a rather poetic "taste of Christ's love," as carefully delineated in the Solomonic Song:

> Behold, thou art fair, my love . . . thou hast dove's eyes . . . thy hair is as a flock of goats . . . thy lips are like a thread of scarlet . . . thy speech is comely . . . thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate . . . thy neck is like the tower of David . . . honey and milk are under thy tongue . . . thy garments are like the smell of Lebanon . . . thy navel is like a rounded goblet . . . thy belly is like a heap of wheat . . . thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins . . . thy stature is like to a palm tree . . . thy breasts to clusters of grapes . . . and the smell of thy nose like apples.

In 1925, Ralph Sommerville, a professor of literature at New York State University, delivered a radio address in which he stated that Solomon's passionate song should be read by people with mature minds in appreciation of their style of expression, and never exposed to children. No doubt he was concerned that young minds might fail to make the proper connection between the utterances of the biblical Solomon and the graces and taste of Christ's Church and Love.

One final quotation from the last chapter of Solomon's Song (or whoever it was who really composed the work) is significant because of its timeless appeal:

> We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts; what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?

Finally, before ringing down the curtain on this rather recusant examination of portions of the *unholy* Bible, a few words from the Christian Establishment might be in order:

> "The Bible records the most meaningful and creative thinking that men have produced.
>
> "The profound message of the Bible is that Man is a moral failure. His problem is sin, and he needs a power to break its grip and free him from its guilt.
>
> "Man needs a power not his own—the power of God to step in and do for him what he cannot do for himself.
>
> "Man must have the Bible to speak to this need."

THANKS A LOT!!!!!

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Christ-ianity

The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

(John 3:35.)

To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give. But it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

(Matthew 20:23.)

"What is this thing called Christianity?" someone once asked—a question with some relevance, even today, considering the following statistics: Christianity commands the allegiance of one-third of the human species and there are some 120 million members of Christian churches in the United States of America alone.

Was Christianity truly a divine legend identifying the Nazarene Jesus with God? . . . a religion of distinctive doctrines and innovative ethical values? . . . a legitimate heir of all goodness which had previously existed in the universe?

Had the entire history of the world run its course for the sake of this "new" religion?

Was it, from the first, a totally separate religion from Judaism?

Did it represent a break in the ancient religious patterns in that it was a religion of "new ideas"?

Was it truly a "Faith once delivered to the Saints" representing a separate people, a new race, the True Israel—the "true-high-priestly race of God!" as Justin Martyr so grandly declared?

"A thousand times, NO!" the most objective investigators of the origins of Christianity—Guignebert, Loisy, Jackson, Lake, Robertson, Cumont, Bacon, *et al.*—would shout in unison, none of whom accept the orthodox account of Christian origins. (Needless to say, I am not referring to theologians here. The allegorical exegesis of Christian apologists is as barren of objectivity as today's intellectual salutations to Marxism, Maoism and Marcusianism.)

The most logical scholarly conclusion is that the *earliest* Christians were thoroughgoing Jews. The thought that they were departing from the customs and beliefs of their fathers couldn't have been more alien to them. In the beginning, the faith that was to evolve into Christianity was, in many ways,

an *Oriental* religion. The first adherents of that Messianic cult were not concerned with founding a "separate" church (that idea came with the Hellenized Jews who soon took over the faith). They had no priests and no sacraments; they had no concept of a system; and for a long time—even after Paul and the disciples of Philo had come aboard—there was no one uniform church, no single type of Church order, and no distinct sign of an episcopal government (no one is certain to this day about when the relative ranks of various church officials—bishop, presbyter, deacon—were originated). Nevertheless, by the end of the 1st century, the spirit of universalism had pervaded the movement which was beginning to stand forth in history as separate from Judaism.

With the uniting of sacramentalism (the establishment of solemn religious ordinances or ceremonies regarded as necessary to salvation) and Greek Hellenism, Christianity began to move, to expand, to take shape. Historic religions are all alike in that they are born of myth and develop through myth. As they all derive from each other, build on each other, and even steal from each other, they are simply phases of a continuous evolution.

Like the other major faiths of mankind, Christianity soon became a complex of many religions . . . a vast accretion of tenets, rites and ethical ideas . . . a synthesis of different forms of faith and worship . . . in short, a syncretistic hodge-podge. The French scholar Ernest Renan is even less flattering in his description of Christian origins. He dismisses nearly everything in the faith as "mere baggage brought from the pagan mysteries"—a coalescent intermingling of Persian-Mithraic and Greek doctrines, along with the not insignificant contributions of Gnosticism and the Magna Mater, of Buddhism and Stoicism, of Orphism and Hinduism. The Christians even drew on the Sibyls for inspiration (a pregnant indication that they were not above stealing from almost anybody).

Beginning with the myth of the savior-sun-god, we find it to be the common property of Asia for thousands of years before the Christian era. The idea of a god dying for the benefit of his worshipers was anything but new. It had its origin in the fact that nature seemed to die down in winter and revive herself in springtime. The descent of the savior-god into the underworld and his victorious reappearance was an important part of the religions of Babylon and Egypt. The pattern and the progression of this passion play was always the same—that of the annual sun. A lowly winter birth and his terrible struggles with that cold and stormy season, followed at the spring equinox by his Passover, Cross-over, Crossification, or Crucifixion, as he triumphantly crosses over the Equator and ascends into the northern half of the sky, thus ensuring the salvation of mankind.

Which brings us to the *ascension*—once again, nothing much to speak of, as far as newness or originality are concerned. All the pagan gods ascended to some heavenly paradise. The mythical legend inevitably ended that way. The belief was even held in the Graeco-Roman world that the spirits of certain distinguished men had *visibly* ascended to heaven. It was said of Pythagoras; it was also said that he appeared to his disciples after his death. It was even said of him that while he lived he could return the dead to life.

Regarding some of the other adopted or purloined "baggage"—the Chris-

tians borrowed the "brotherhood of all men" and "equality" doctrines from the Stoic creed . . . The doctrine of original sin came out of the teaching of Orphism . . . The hope of "salvation of humanity" was entertained by the religions of Egypt, Babylonia and Persia . . . From the Hindus came the story of the prodigal son and the Talents . . . The Jewish philosopher Philo contributed the idea of grace . . . From the Greeks the Christians took the Platonic idea of the Logos . . . From India came the doctrine of incarnation . . . Jewish theologians gave them the ideas of a divine kingdom (the Kingdom of God), trust in one almighty God, and the concept of racial elitism—the mystic pride in the "chosen people" myth. (Before long, the Christians interpreted that to mean *religious* exclusivity as opposed to the *racial* exclusivity of the Jews.)

From the Gnostics, the Christians borrowed the connection of sin with the body . . . The idea of a new birth originated with the Chinese and the Eleusinians . . . The sacramental value was Pythagorean . . . The belief in the trinity common to East and West at the time . . . The rites of baptism and sacrifice could have come from almost any pagan religion or mystery cult of the day . . . From the Persian system of faith came the "end time" concept—that the Great Day was at hand when the world would come to an end and the Divine Being would return upon the clouds of heaven. The Rosary is unquestionably of pagan origin. The festival of John the Baptist in June took the place of the pagan midsummer festival of water and bathing; the Assumption of the Virgin in August the place of Diana in the same month; and the festival of All Souls early in November, that of the worldwide pagan feasts of the dead and their ghosts at the same season. (Happy Halloween, kids.)

The Cross-symbol was certainly universal in pre-Christian times. As the representation of an intensely masculine or male phallic symbol, it has been reverenced by peoples all over the world, including the Chaldeans, Phoenicians and Mexicans. It has been found on temples, palaces, natural rocks, sepulchral galleries, on coins, medals and vases of every description. There are several varieties of cross, St. George, St. Andrew, Maltese, Greek, Latin and many more, and they all date back to the remotest antiquity. The Crux Ansata (indicating the conjunction of the two sexes in one design) belonged to an old Egyptian ritual. The crooked cross of the 20th century National Socialists of Germany is found in Sanskrit, the ancient Aryan language of India.

The central act in the cult of Mithraism was the Last Supper—a "sacramental means of grace" in which union with a god could be assured at the sacred banquet where the divine flesh and blood is consumed by the worshiper. During the Holy Supper, a mystic union with the Deity is produced by eating him, the same as the sacred Mithraic meal. When his followers eat and assimilate the god, they are deemed to assimilate the virtues of the god. The Christian eucharist has exactly the same significance.

The rite was also practiced by the Egyptians in the worship of one of their chief deities, Osiris, God of Vegetation. (The other being Ra, the God of the Sun.)

When the coffin lid of Set I, father of Rameses, was discovered (he lived around 1300 B.C.), an inscription on the side was disclosed depicting the

most important events and customs of his life and times. One shows a man carrying a loaf of bread, another a feather, exemplifying Truth and Justice, while below him is a man with a scythe. Other men tend wheat plants, which formed part of their religion and were held sacred. A translation of the inscription by Sir Wallis Budge, Keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities in the British Museum, reads as follows:

> They are Laborers in the fields of wheat of Tuat (meaning the Other World). The plants they tended and reaped are said to be Members of Osiris. The Plant was Osiris, and Osiris was the Plant, and they became blessed in eating the Bread of Everlastingness, which was made from the Grain; they ate Osiris. But Osiris was also Maat, the Truth, so in eating his body they became One with Him, and therefore Eternal, and they were called to the enjoyment of the Land and of the House of Life and to its Truth.

No, there was nothing really new about the entire gamut of potent Christian doctrines: Sin and Sacrifice and Salvation, the Savior, the Second Birth, the Transfiguration, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Eucharist. Nothing. They all found a commonality with most of the religions of the ancient world.

In shaping itself so thoroughly after the pattern of the salvation cults that were popular in the gentile world of that day, Christianity became a *gentile* movement. In plain terms, the early success of the faith was rooted in the deep Messianic hope that existed among the Jewish people. But it quickly spread beyond those roots because it offered something totally alien to the synagogue—*private* salvation by supernatural means. The words "Our Father which art in heaven . . ." were one of the many legacies of the Jewish synagogue to the Christian Church. In the religion of Judaism, however, the remote, fierce and impersonal Yahweh ("OUR Father") was the Father of Israel, of the nation, of the whole people. The founders of Christianity recognized the need to personalize the relationship. In the mystery religions, the second god was always the son of the great god. So the Christians created a Son to restore the divine intimacy, thus making the Christian God the Father of the individual.

Christianity began with the trappings of just another Messianic cult as it rearranged the patterns of fear, tradition, superstition and motivation. By the end of the 2nd century it had blossomed into a full-fledged *mystery* (meaning *secret* rather than mysterious in our sense of the term) religion, a Graeco-Oriental faith offering salvation, more exclusive claims than its competitors, the promise of immortality for repentance in the form of fasting and a little prayer, and shortcuts to a heavenly kingdom through baptism and other sacramental means.

"The frail little Jewish plant," as Guignebert describes the creed, "transported into this fruitful Hellenistic soil, quickly became a luxuriant tree."

The concept of a Jewish plant blooming in Hellenistic soil is hardly within the easiest range of comprehension. Since nothing about the emergence of Christianity out of the chaos and turmoil of the Hellenistic Orient can be

called simplistic, looking at the story from a less complex perspective might be helpful.

There was once a Jewish teacher (rabbi) of some sort who was the founder and guiding genius of a heretical sect. Because of his activities he aroused the hatred of some powerful people who had him condemned to death. He had a few followers who were Jews who began to teach after his death. Other Jews, including Saul, who took the name of Paul, became interested in this new faith and decided to transplant it. Early on, they were wise enough to realize that their child of faith could never spread outside the ranks of Jewry as long as it retained the binding and inhibiting Jewish customs and rites (circumcision, for one). So the decision was made to assimilate this Jewish rabbi to the concept of a savior-god which would be made in the image of all the other divine heroes. If at all possible, he should appear to be greater and more remarkable than all the others; but under no conditions could he be less great and wonderful than any of the others.

To that end they labored.

It was a far-ranging project calling for the nearly endless borrowing of ideas and rites from other religions, the rearrangement and fertilization of myths, the divorcing of the new religion from that of the Jews to as great a degree as possible, while retaining much of the old religion—e.g., the Jewish God, the laws supposedly given to Moses on the holy mount, and the writings of the Old Testament prophets—to provide a foundation for the new. In short, they had to attempt the formidable task of putting new wine into new bottles—that is, the new wine of the new Savior-God into the new bottles of the Christians—a task involving the manufacturing of the new wine out of the old while using at the same time the old wine to vindicate the worth of the new. It was a task both monumental and mind-bending.

Paul may have been the guiding genius behind those adventurous Jews who set out nearly 2000 years ago to build a "new" faith. (It took at least 400 years to create the Christian system in the face of much controversy and many quarreling sects within the faith, but Paul and his compatriots set the pace, it seems, for those who followed.)

Who was Paul?

Even among the best scholars there are many variant responses to that question.

His mind belonged to the realm of the irrational . . . He was a mystic . . . No man stood higher morally or intellectually . . . He was a creative and systemic theologian . . . He wrecked the religion of Israel on the cross of Christ . . . He was a confessed enigma . . . If he had ever been a rabbinic Jew he had dismissed everything he had ever learned . . . His Hellenism was responsible for his love of freedom . . . He used the Law when it was convenient to do so or rejected it as freely . . . He superimposed upon the mild ethics of Jesus the harsh doctrines of original sin, redemption and grace . . . With the raptures of Paul and the Johannine Gospel, Grand mysticism had its beginning in Christianity . . . He formulated no single eschatological system.

Among the more notable writers and theologians of the early Church, Tertullian called him the apostle of heretics; Justin didn't seem to consider him worth mentioning, nor the Clementine Homiliae and Recognitiones; and

if he was so significant, why did the Didache and the Epistle of Barnabas pass him by as if he never existed?

Whoever and whatever Paul was, there is no evidence that he ever possessed any sort of compendium of the words and deeds of Jesus. And as far as the authenticity of the Pauline Epistles are concerned, a number of scholars deny it and place them in the 2nd century. (No doubt Paul did write some letters as he attempted to spread the message about his new savior-god. If we can believe Jerome, Paul had already begun to rewrite passages from the Jewish Scriptures to provide a foundation for his faith. In the centuries that followed, however, his "Epistles" were probably *updated* and *reworked* numerous times.) For these reasons, the opinion of the fine French historian Loisy is worth considering. "The role of Paul," he writes, "has been greatly overemphasized."

The great unsolved mystery then is this: Was gentile Christianity a product of Paul? Or was Paul a product of gentile Christianity?

Regardless of the controversy, the symbolic use of Paul as being representative of those who were involved in the early stages of the building of the new religion contributes greatly to the understanding of the origins of the faith.

Paul was a Hellenized Jew—a Greek by training and taste. He was deeply appreciative of the higher Greek philosophy which included the conception of and the unity and purity of God. The ideas of an Infinite Father, wise, merciful and caring, were predominantly those of the Greek philosopher, Plato.

Paul was also a devout student of Philo, the Jewish philosopher of Alexandria. Along with Paul, Philo helped to provide the new religion with some of its terminology and theology. Philo's major consideration was to reconcile Moses and Plato—to mingle biblical exegesis with Greek philosophy. In a drastic attempt to find Greek philosophy in the sacred writings of the Hebrews, he tried to prove that all of the grand discoveries of Greece had been made by Hebrews a thousand years before. Significantly, Philo was enchanted with the Logos, the divine intelligence operating in the universe, as he described it, the great power serving God. In the Logos, Philo saw the greatness of God and the Wisdom of God.

So Paul began by skillfully blending the basic ideas of the mystery cults. Being from Tarsus where the rites of Mithra and Dionysus were widely performed it is likely that he was well-versed in the rites and activities of sun-godism. In the very language he used ("Oh! mysteries truly holy . . . the Lord is the hierophant . . .") the strong similarity between pagan terminology and the Christian sacraments is more than evident. He mingled Mosaic, Greek and Persian ideas. Using Philo's interpretation he identified his savior-god with the eternal Logos. Like Philo his aim was to reconcile his Jewish heritage with his Greek learning. This called for a careful integrating of two diverse and different cultures—a fusion of Jewish ideas with Greek speculation, while denying the literal interpretation of the Jewish scriptures. Consider for a moment the skill with which he blended Jeremiah and Philo. In a creative example of bringing the law up to date instead of abolishing it, he raised the circumcision of the flesh to the circumcision of the heart.

Eventually, as the new faith grew in importance and scope, Jesus the man became far less important to the Founding Fathers of the religion than Jesus the Christ. (Christ in Greek means "the anointed one.") Whether a single historical Jesus, an archetype (pattern or model) of the earthly man who became Christianity's begotten and unbegotten God in man ever existed, we can only guess. (More on this in Chapter Thirty.) We do know what Paul wanted to do—HAD to do, in fact. Although he knew of the Christ after the flesh, now he could know him no longer. He had to *liberate* the savior-god from the physical facts of life. A person could believe in Jesus *or* in the Christ, he knew, but not in *both*. (The fact that Paul's writings give no account of the scourging, the crown of thorns, the virgin birth and numerous other events in the life of Jesus indicates his indifference to the earth-bound activities of the Nazarene.) As Paul perceived it, a *proper* God had to be molded; a divine legend had to be created and preserved. Only if the man Jesus died and was then resurrected could he become the supernatural, divinely glorious Judge. Only in that way could he condemn the unbelieving sinful, reward all who had put their trust in him, and inaugurate the reign of God. Only in that way could the death on the cross be made acceptable.

In other words, the new God *had* to be a Savior. The new religion *had* to offer salvation. There *had* to be the myth of the deliverer, the scapegoat, the sacrificial offering on the fructifying tree. Hero-worship was deeply felt by the Greeks, while the sacrificial scapegoat was commonplace in the lore of the ancient world. The combination of the two gave the early Christians their symbol of the Savior. The holier-than-thou Man-Christ untouched by sin would wash the sins of the guilty human race away. The principles of transferring human transgressions to some animal or other medium had been a widespread practice of people even more primitive than the Hebrews. The scapegoat of the Jews is a duplication of the myth of the ritual red heifer, which in Egyptian mythology stood for Typhon, the Evil One. And thus it was that Jesus called the Christ was molded in the image of the age-old sacrificed god idea . . . the scapegoat . . . the divine sacrifice for all . . . a substitutionary atonement, as it were; or, in more Christianized terms: "The sins of the world will be taken away by God's gift of pain; the love of God will be shown through suffering." Psychoanalytically speaking, the Son submits to the Father and is then slain. This results in a sense of guilt . . . the need for self-punishment to relieve it . . . the development of the belief that death is necessary to life . . . and a religion erected around a mystery of salvation based on the suffering and death of Jesus Christ conceived as redemptive.

And so, the Jesus who supposedly taught such elementary beliefs as the need for repentance and the imminent end of the world was soon sacrificed to the Glorified Lord of "God's omniscient and compassionate scheme . . ." He was turned into a vegetation-god slain on a sacred tree. He became a sun-god like Ra, the Egyptian deity, or Mithra buried in a rock tomb. He became a hundred savior heroes all wrapped up in one. He was confused with Dionysus or the Phoenix or Jason or Joshua. Jason and Joshua and Jesus are all the same in the language of mythology. With twelve helpers Joshua passed through the Jordan. Jason went after the golden fleece with twelve helpers. The sun wanders through the twelve signs of the zodiac.

And so Jesus wandered through the Holy Land with twelve disciples. In the religion of the sun-worshipers the twelfth month is the betrayer of the sun that sickens and dies at the winter solstice. So Jesus is betrayed by the twelfth disciple. (This betrayal was also necessary to fulfill an Old Testament "prophecy.")

Once their savior-god was created, the Christians recognized him as the divine head of their mystery cult and themselves as his initiates and God's chosen people. The word Christ was turned into a proper name; Jesus *the* Christ became *Jesus Christ*.

In following this complex god-building path, the theologians reduced the simple, poetic myth that developed around the Nazarene to dogma; they debased it to the level of the common understanding until it became only another superstition. They built a Bible out of fetishes, legends, parables, poems, songs, prayers and moral apothegms, and they turned their faith into a cult of saints, multiple deities (three gods in one Substance), demons, oracles, prophets, miracles, wonder-workers, prodigies, signs, portents and auguries—a veritable metaphysical dungeon containing much of the primitive "baggage" of the Semitic and pagan religions of the Hellenistic Orient.

There are three significant stages in the development of the Christian savior-god:

1) The assimilation of a Jewish rabbi to the savior-gods of Asia.

2) The Christianizing of the Old Testament: the finding of distinctive doctrines of Christianity expressed or implied in all parts of the Jewish Bible, as well as statements that could be used as "prophetic" vindications of the new faith.

3) The adoption of the moral precepts of many of the peoples around them to be blended into the legend of Jesus the Christ. (There isn't a single teaching in the Gospels that cannot be paralleled in the ethical literature of the Jews, Greeks, Romans and Hindus.)

Of the many mystery religions, Mithra, Isis and the Magna Mater (the great Mother, Cybele, whose Phrygian cult was introduced in Rome in 204 B.C.) were most influential on the Christian religion. They all had characteristics in common: a purification rite of initiation, a communion with the deity, a look to the future life, a foundation dealing with a god's life, death and coming back to life, the mourning of the dying god, the celebration of resurrection, the glorification and exalting of the god, the promise of personal salvation through sacraments, and the triumph of the god following suffering and death.

In a word, every *iota* of the cult-hero the Christians created belonged to savior-gods all over Asia.

Apollo, Hercules, Hermes, Mithra and Poseidon were born in caves. So Jesus was born in a cave—or so the earliest Christians believed. (It was a little later that the manger became his place of birth.) Hermes, Dionysus and Ion were wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger (meaning perhaps the Greek *liknon*). So Jesus was similarly wrapped and laid in a manger. Apollo, Hermes and Confucius talked immediately after birth. Some early Christians preached that Jesus did the same. Moses and Samuel and the god-boy Horus were all child geniuses who confounded their elders. So Jesus at the age of twelve confounded the wise men in the temple. A star

marked the birth of Mithra, and wise men, or *magi,* followed it and carried gifts to the newborn infant. And thus it was that a star had to mark the birth of Jesus and three wise men bearing gifts had to follow that star.

In the Sibylline Oracles, the works of the legendary prophetesses who tried to foretell events for their illiterate and superstitious followers, the Christians learned that ". . . with two fishes, he shall satisfy five thousand men in the wilderness . . . and he shall raise the dead." So Jesus had to raise the dead and feed a multitude with fish. The Babylonian Ebani, a wild and shaggy man who lived in the wilderness, preached that the Kingdom of God was near. One day he entered a boat with his disciples and a storm came up and, miracle of miracles, he stilled the waters. So Jesus had to be involved in a situation where he could still the waters when they became rough. Like all the savior-gods Jesus had to rise from death. Among the Egyptians the ascension of Osiris was called the *passion.* (Even among the Jews it was believed that Enoch and Elijah went straight to heaven without bothering to put on a shroud.) Like Attis, Dionysus, Mithra and most of the savior-gods, Jesus had to rise on the third day. Like Osiris, Adonis and Attis, Jesus predestined, prepared and assured the salvation of those who became partakers in his passion. And naturally, Jesus had to measure up to Poseidon's son, Orion, who walked on water.

As the Christian Establishment explains it, Satan anticipated Christianity and created imitations of the faith within the pagan religions that preceded it. Should that be the case, the "deceiving serpent" must have worked overtime in turning Krishna into a faultless duplicate of Christ. Both were born of virgin mothers who were acclaimed by angels. Both births were announced by stars. Both mothers have the same name, Maya and Mary. In the image of Jesus, Krishna was preceded by a forerunner preparing the way. He was born in a stable or a cave and adored by shepherds. He talked immediately after birth. A wicked ruler took the forerunner's life after the birth. His parents then had to flee because the wicked ruler sought to kill the divine child. Like Jesus, Krishna became a deity in human form, he had twelve disciples chosen largely from fishermen, he was tempted by Satan, he miraculously fed a multitude with fish, he walked on water, he descended into hell, he was crucified and the sun darkened at his death, and he arose from death and ascended to heaven.

According to Christian apologists, Mithra was another one of Satan's Christs. A crown of thorns was placed on the brow of Mithra to symbolize his degradation and suffering. In all the heathen cults the god was mocked and scourged. And so it was with Jesus. Mithra was born from a rock, his birth was attended by shepherds, his worship comprised baptism, fasts, communion and a holy supper, and his votaries were called brothers and sisters in the Lord. In Matthew, the word *rock* is used to describe the Church. Why was this term important to the Gospel story? Matthew—or, to be more precise, one of the contributors to the book of Matthew during the first four centuries of the Christian experience—was a devotee to one degree or another of Mithraism. He was impressed by the *rock* of Mithra worship, so he injected it into the Jesus story. Athena was born from the head of Zeus. Dionysus was born from the genitals. But Mithra was born from a rock. He was even called Petrogenes, meaning the rock-born. In the same Gospel

story we find Simon or Simeon called Peter. In Greek, Petros or Peter means rock, and Simeon was a popular name for deity among the Jews.

So what do we have?

Simon called Peter who is god the rock like the rock-born Mithra.

Janus was a Roman deity—the god of gates and doors, hence, of all beginnings. Janus, bearing the keys and the rod, stands at the head of the twelve months and keeps the gate of heaven. So Peter the rock is given the keys of the kingdom. And Peter the fisherman heads the twelve apostles and winds up as Saint Peter guarding the gates of the Christian heaven.

All divine babies, royal sons, or god-children were threatened with death. Nimrod tried to kill Abraham. A pharaoh tried to kill all the firstborn sons. Joab tried to slay the child Hadad by killing all the boys in Edom. It was even said that the Roman senate instituted a slaughter of infants for the purpose of destroying the infant Augustus. So Jesus was threatened and had to be hidden away like Moses, Sargon, Trakhan, Dionysus, Zeus, Poseidon and numerous other royal or divine children.

The mother of Adonis was Myrrh. The mother of Hermes, Maia. The mother of Krishna, Maya. And Maira was the name of the dogstar, the star of Isis. Most of the gods, it appears, had to be born of Mary. Mary is Myrrh is Maia is Maya is Maira. These words are all the same as *mare,* which means the sea. And so, Hermes, Buddha, Jesus and all the others were not only born in the cave of the underworld, Mary (just as the sun is born from the womb of the underworld), they were also born from the sea-womb as well. (The idea that all life came from the sea probably originated with the Greeks.) And, as noted earlier, all the savior-gods were born of virgins: Isis the virgin; Artemis, queen of heaven, also a virgin mother; Leto, the mother of Apollo, and Cybele, the *Mater Deum Magna Idaea* (the mother of gods), and Demeter, the earth mother, were all virgins. (Regarding Christian Madonna-worship, the Virgin Mary was seen in the 1st century as another Isis and representations of her as a black goddess were etched in the catacombs. The elevation of Mary to a position of splendor in the Roman Church was very slow because of the power of the patriarchal concept inherited from the theology of the Jews. By the 20th century, however, Catholic writers were telling their readers that Mary ascended bodily to heaven without dying. Christians seem never to be at a loss when it comes to laying a premium on the fantastic.)

The birth of Mithra, the immemorial sun-god, was at the winter solstice, about December twenty-fifth. So eventually Jesus had to be born on that date. It was a long time though before the Christians could make up their minds about that. They couldn't even agree upon the *year*. Some said he was born when Herod was king; others that he was thirty years old in the fifteenth year of Tiberius. As to the *day* of birth, some said it was the same day as that of Julius Caesar. Others believed that it was on the thirtieth of the Egyptian month of Epap and the miraculous birthday of the god-child Horus. It is possible that the earliest Christians celebrated the sixth of January as the birthday of Jesus, a date when the festival of the appearance of Dionysus was celebrated. Clement of Alexandria chose 17 November, 3 B.C. as the wondrous date of birth. Christmas day wasn't introduced until the 4th century. Nearly 200 years later, a Scythian monk named Dionysius Exiguus

was commissioned to fix the birthdate once and for all. He chose December 25th, of course, the birthday of the sun—and Mithra, and Horus, and Ra, etc. The Christians then made the Dionysian festival day of January sixth a special day to commemorate the coming of the Magi to Jesus at Bethlehem.

For a long time the Christians observed the Jewish sabbath rather than the pagan holy day of the sun. Eventually, however, they consecrated a "Lord's Day" to Jesus—the first day of the week honored among the pagan sun-worshipers. It was in the 4th century that the Roman Church adopted Sunday as the official Lord's Day. The name Easter comes from Eostre an Anglo-Saxon goddess of the spring. The churches of Rome and Asia could not agree on the day on which the resurrection of Jesus the Christ should be observed, and the controversy finally got a little nasty. So Rome just excommunicated Asia. (Take that, you bums!) Nonetheless . . . because the glory of the Sun's rebirth proved irresistible, we all wound up happily celebrating the pagan resurrection of the unconquered sun. (Happy Easter, kids.)

Converting Jesus into a sun-god wasn't a *some*-time thing. It took centuries of continuous labor; and before it was finished, numerous Christians—bishops Papias and Irenaeus among them—simply preferred to believe that Jesus lived to be an old man and died a natural death. (People like that are often called conservatives.)

Over and over in the New Testament, the Christians say that the prophecies must be fulfilled ("This that is written must yet be accomplished by me . . .")—and so it all came conveniently to pass as the founders of the new religion claimed countless passages and events in the Old Testament as their own, slanting and rewriting them so they would fit Christian prepossessions. (Faith has always found it easy to procure the illusions necessary for her salvation and her dissemination.) How could Judas have benefitted the Sanhedrin by telling them where Jesus could be found? According to the Gospels, Jesus entered the city hailed by the multitudes, as they cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" That information was available to anyone with eyes. But a *betrayal* was essential to the Christian writers because, through the act of Judas, another prophecy could be fulfilled, and Jesus could be matched up once again with the sun-gods who were also betrayed.

In the book of Judges it is written, "For, lo, you shall conceive and bear a son . . . for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb." So the early Christians call Jesus a Galilean born in a place called Nazareth. But then they locate a passage in Micah that can be *fulfilled* by having him born in Bethlehem of Judea. But that confronts them with the dilemma of how to get him there. So Luke fabricates a story about a decree from Caesar Augustus demanding that all should be taxed in the city of his or her birth. Joseph and the pregnant Mary are then made to travel in the tale nearly 100 miles just to pay the tax. Now, and very conveniently, Jesus can be born in Bethlehem *instead* of Nazareth because this fits felicitously with the Old Testament prediction about the Messiah ben-David being born in Judea. (The census of Quirinus, governor of Syria, was in A.D. 6, yet Jesus was supposedly born before the death of Herod, in either 4 or 3 B.C. The birth, therefore, if we can trust Tertullian, was not in the census of Quirinus but the census of Saturninus, which was in 7 B.C.)

Dionysus was attended by an ox and an ass. So the Christians look in Isaiah and they find that the ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib. Then they draw pictures of Jesus as a babe in a basket under a shed, with an ox and an ass at his feet, and—hallelujah brother!—another "prophecy" is fulfilled. Zechariah wrote about "an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass." So Matthew speaks of "an ass, *and* the foal of an ass." (Emphasis added.) But Mark and Luke speak only of a colt. Why? More to the point, why did Matthew make it two? Maybe the writer was influenced by the God Bacchus who rode on two asses. But it is more likely that he drew his inspiration from the knowledge that an ass and its foal was the Greek sign of the constellation cancer.

In the little Jewish book called the *Sotah,* the Christians found the words about the son turning against the father, the daughter against the mother, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law in the time of the Messiah, "when a man's foes shall be they of his own household." And so, in Matthew, those terrible words about hating one's relatives are placed in the mouth of Jesus. For centuries, Lao Tse, Buddha, Plato, Socrates and Pittacus had been teaching that good must be returned for evil; the Jews said, "Cast not your pearls before swine . . ." first; "He who would do injury to another has already done it," declared Seneca; "The Gods regard with delight the man who when struck does not strike back," says a Hindu proverb; and, lo and behold, Jesus repeats them all. Two hundred years before Christ, Tiberius Gracchus said that the foxes had holes and the birds had nests but man had no place to lay his head. So the Christians give these words to Jesus. As if it was his, they have Jesus repeat the old Jewish maxim about those who exalt themselves being humbled, and those who humble themselves being exalted. From Seneca, Plato, Pittacus, even from the Sibyls, the Christians purloined words and ideas and used them to give credence to their fabricated Jesus. There are many pagan texts found in Seneca, Epictetus and Aurelius, for instance, which are parallel to "the Kingdom of God is within you."

Yahweh, not Jesus, enters the temple in the twenty-fourth psalm. Matthew dispenses the blood money of Judas to buy cemetery plots for the poor, for the very obvious purpose of fulfilling a so-called prophecy in Jeremiah. The passage in Matthew, 5:28 ("Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart . . ."), was taken almost verbatim from one of the treatises of the Talmud called *Challah*. The circumcision of Abraham supposedly looks forward in spirit to the coming of Jesus. Jonah spent three days and nights in the belly of a whale. To fulfill this "prophecy" Jesus came to life after three days and nights. The pedigree in Matthew is just an imitation of the genealogical tables in a book called Chronicles. Other distortions include King David singing a hymn to Israel and *his* God, and not to the forthcoming Christ; Solomon speaks of an eternal *heavenly* reign, and not of the reign of the Christian savior-god. When the Jews speak of the Lord in their holy books, they mean Yahweh, *their* God, and not some curious *Son* of God to come.

There are any number of passionate appeals to the Jewish God, made in the name of Israel, which Christians appropriated and twisted to suit their needs. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—meaning that

Israel, not an individual, had been forsaken by Yahweh—is the most prominent of these. When the prophets appealed to Yahweh using personal pronouns ("I" or "me"), or when they used descriptions like "man" or "suffering servant" or "son"—they were *always* speaking of *Israel,* of *all* Jews, not *one* Jew, and certainly not a Messiah. ("Redeem Israel, O God, out of all *his* troubles." Emphasis added.) Either the Christians never understood this or they deliberately ignored it. "Oh Yahweh," pleads Habakkuk, "how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear?"—meaning that Israel is crying out to Yahweh. "Out of Egypt have I called my son," said Hosea. To fulfill a so-called prophecy, Matthew has the family of Jesus fleeing to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod. But Hosea meant that *Israel* was the son being called from Egypt. "O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?" was not David's cry; it was Israel's cry.

The light shining alone on Jesus, the interpreting of Shiloh to mean the Christian Lord, the scepter rising out of Israel, the betrayal of a familiar friend, the offering of a pain-killing drink ("they made me eat gall . . ."), the curing of the sick, the cries in the wilderness, the parting of garments among them, the piercing of the hands and feet, the desolation of the high places—all these ideas and many more were taken from writings the Jews never intended as support for anything outside of their own totally obsessive religion, and twisted and corrupted by Christians in a fanciful effort to fulfill everything they could conceive of as being a "prophecy." And then they had the mind-boggling gall to not only call *their* savior-god the son of the Jewish Yahweh, they salted the wound with the declaration that Israel had been abandoned by the Jewish God. As Paul explained it, the destiny and mission of Israel was interrupted. Because of the sinfulness and the unbelief of the Jews, he charged, God had turned His face from them. So, with equal aversion, the Jews turned their faces from Christianity—and the two faiths have been implacable adversaries for two millennia (two thousand-year periods, the cynic might be inclined to add, during which time the "Coming One" didn't come).

How is it possible—even in the wildest stretches of fantasy—for anyone to believe that so God-centered ("The Lord our God, the Lord is One, transcendent, immutable, eternal . . .") a people as the Jews would ever have included in their holy writings conceptions and predictions relating to other gods and other religions? And yet, that is precisely what the Christians believed—or *pretended* to believe. There is no such thing as a suffering or dying Messiah in the Old Testament. Only the most extremist of Jews, or the most desperate, would ever have been attracted to so alien a concept—a contradiction in terms representing a *failed* Messiah who could never fulfill the wish-fantasies of Judaism.

Even in the face of organized opposition to and hatred for their religion by Jews the Founding Fathers of Christianity persisted in rewriting and misreading Old Testament passages to underprop their doctrines and dogmas with an indifference to truth that simply surpasses belief. (Has any other religion on earth been constructed with such shocking arrogance and brazen duplicity? On second thought, has any religion on earth been founded in any other way?) Tragically, 2000 years later, countless millions of the simple faithful are still wrapped up in this unjustly fashioned religion—still mes-

merized by childish dreams worked up in a theological nightmare and adopted in the face of all reasonable contemplation. (Are the minds of most human beings so simple that they must live by such a catalogue of wonders?)

If there weren't so many pretzel-neck historians in the Western world who either uncritically accept, or bend themselves out of shape to justify, the allegorized and spiritualized reveries of the Christians, there wouldn't be so much ignorance about this subject. In response to the criticism that Jesus often uttered thoughts in the identical words found in the writings of others (Epictetus, for example), historian Will Durant offered this argument: "Who knows but that Epictetus had read in some form the sayings of Jesus and was, without knowing it, a convert to Christianity?" (Somewhere between crack-brained and whacked-out, this apologetic could be fitted in very nicely.) The beliefs of Epictetus were current long before Jesus was supposedly born and reputable scholars know it. Of course great moral apothegms would be similar down through the centuries. Of course there is nothing wrong with both Confucius and Jesus teaching the Golden Rule. But what transfers the biblical Jesus from the realm of the real to that of the fabricated is the fact that *everything* he says is taken practically verbatim from very obvious sources. Except for fools, or for people who labor under the subconscious influence of preposterous and long disproved prepossessions, life does not habitually provide us with such neatly wrapped and beribboned packages. (It was Will Durant, by the by, who once surmised that the Queen of Sheba "probably came from Arabia." Interesting, considering the fact that the best scholars have been unable to come up with solid evidence that such a person ever existed. The religious scholar Reinhold Niebuhr is another big winner in the thumbsucker—"learned person"—department. Because of original sin, man is anxious, he explains, and because he is anxious, he sins. People who say things like that are often called theologians.)

By this time, a summary might be of some help.

Around two millennia ago, it all began in a place now known as the Holy Land. It was a time racked by political and religious chaos and social confusion—a time in which there were many professed Messiahs and self-styled "teachers of righteousness" peddling their mystical wares. Any number of them must have been put to death for their fanaticism, their arrogance, or their pretensions. Legends grew up around those who were executed. One of them who was probably named Joshua (Jesus), since that was a common personal name among the Jews, must have been more significant, more noticeable than the others, a more charismatic figure perhaps who attracted more followers and devoted disciples.

It was this Messianic figure who may have attracted the attention of Paul and his disciples. They were men of vision who were the theological and philosophical products of institutions that were crumbling around them. They were thinkers ahead of their time who could see the need for the development of more *universal* religious forms. Presumably, they turned to Joshua whose image seemed to be a little larger than life. To the legends of his story, they added the more significant legends of other doomed Messiah-pretenders, collecting them from wherever they could be found, in Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus, or Rome. Eventually, they tied them together in Gospel form in tribute to their crucified Messiah.

They blended their charismatic rabbi with the sun-gods of Asia, using the more dramatic and significant savior-god attributes to construct for their new cult their very own Savior-God/Son of God. To this syncretistic faith, they added the moral precepts of all the peoples around them; and they vindicated it with "prophecies" taken from Jewish writings.

They combined the cruel and remote Yahweh of the Jews with the Platonist concept of a more humane god, to provide an all-powerful Father-God for their cult—a god of hellfire and damnation, nonetheless, a "LOVE ME OR ELSE!" god, more Jewish than Platonist, who mercilessly consigns all sinners, heretics and non-Christians to the eternal fires of hell.

They used the Greek Logos to link their savior-god with God the Father—the concept that the savior was the Word of God made flesh, a pre-existent god who became a man—thereby turning their Messiah figure into the true Son of the one Great God. This collusion resulted in the doctrine of the *three* Persons in *one* Substance, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (the invisible presence of God such as that which impregnated Mary, the mother of Jesus).

The canonized "Apostolic Faith" that finally evolved when Christianity became a state-recognized religion didn't resemble in any way the simplistic beliefs of the earlier followers of Jesus. The Nazarene had been transformed into the risen and Heavenly Christ of Faith, and the faith had been turned into an external, ceremonial and theological system. By the time Jesus had been swallowed up in the complexities of dogma—the Christ of the Apostles' Creed, "The only Son of God the Father Almighty"; the Christ of the Nicene Creed, "Very God of Very God, being of one Substance with the Father"; and the "Perfect God and Perfect Man" Christ of the Athanasian Creed—theology had overwhelmed simple faith leaving in its wake the subordination of spirit to law, individualism to the institution, knowledge to faith, and intellectualism and morality to dogma.

With the establishment of a vast accretion of tenets, rites and ethical ideas, including the God concepts of Moses and Plato, the terminology of Philo and Paul, the symbolic mystical brotherhood of man idea of the Stoics, the esoteric spiritual knowledge of the Gnostics such as the doctrine of atonement, the personalizing of God through the manifestation of his presence in his Son, the promise of personal salvation, the sanctity of an exclusive priesthood, and secrecy, a new religion was in full flower.

They called it *Christianity*.

Only one question remains to be answered . . .

Why did it succeed?

Christians are fond of arguing that the mere existence of Christianity and Jesus Christ, the living Son of the most high God, the Eternal Creator of the universe, is proof of divine intervention—irrefutable proof that this religion is part of God's Master Plan. The religion could never have triumphed in the face of so many monumental obstacles if it were not part of such a plan, they argue. One man could never have become so significant in the world if he were not the Son of the divine God.

My objectivity may be crashing on the shoals of cynicism, but I find this argument rather superficial. I mean, it doesn't exactly speak well for the sustaining worth of the system in question. Instead, it is almost like saying

that the Christian legends are so far-fetched, extreme and intellectually preposterous, divine intervention was necessary to assure that human beings would take them seriously.

Regarding this rather artless method of providing a foundation for the question at hand—mere existence presupposes the creative support of an outside agency—more credibility can be mined out of a different bent of thought. I am referring to the Catholic Hilaire Belloc's assumption of supernatural intervention when he stated that the Roman Church must be divine, because "no merely human institution conducted with such knavish imbecility would have lasted a fortnight."

On the serious side, there is nothing supernatural or mysterious about the success of Christianity. There are some very clear and logical reasons underlying its appeal.

The conditions of the age, or the time, contributed much to that success. Everywhere, the driving instinct of humanity hungered for a voice of revelation to solve the mystery of life and death, a Messianic conqueror of the terrors and the *taedium* of life, who would provide a way of redemption by vicarious suffering. It was an age in which subjection was far more prevalent than self-reliance. It was an age filled with people longing for salvation.

The new faith filled that need.

It offered a humanized and suffering god rather than an impersonal, distant god. It appealed to the craving for life after death. It offered more wonders, marvels and miracles which appealed to the insatiable desires of the people. It offered an easier salvation and a simpler ritual. Initiation into the mystery cults of the pagans was expensive, but not in Christianity. And among the Jews, only the aristocrats had holiness. There was no place in most of the religions of the time for the illiterate, the poor, the outcast, or the mentally disturbed—for the multitudes, in other words. So the Christian said to all who would listen, "Take up your burden and come with us." And as the tide rose it spread to the meek and the poor, to the accursed and the outcast, to the prostitute, beggar, leper, criminal . . . everywhere it spread, like a great wind rising and sweeping more and more of the multitudes—the diseased, the crippled, the feeble and old, the insane, the blind or dumb, the slaves—along its path. Come, said the Christian, the last will be first and the first will be last. Come, said the Christian, we will open the temples of holiness to all including the unholy. Come, said the Christian, God sent his son to die for your sins. Come, said the Christian, *join us and be born again*.

One needed only to believe and worship, to know Jesus, and all possible terrors of the unknown would be conquered. The believer would then be personally identified with the sacrificed Christ, and thus he would be assured of a way of redemption by vicarious suffering—*because God and His Christ were on the point of coming*. That was the message that fired the greatest hope. The "end time" was at hand. It was a creed that promised to calm the troubled mind . . . a creed that reached out as did no other to the lower classes . . . a creed that gave them assurance of happiness beyond the grave.

In short, then, Christianity may have succeeded because it had the most appeal and the most powerful psychological weapons in its arsenal: A personal God . . . an ideal scapegoat—a ransom paid to Satan on the cross

of death . . . a gospel of renunciation offering a higher glory in another life . . . a redeeming God promising an easy salvation to the believer regardless of his station in life. It was a religion inferior to that of the pagans in civic and intellectual virtues; but it was superior in what are said to be the virtues of universal appeal and a sense of community.

The symbol of Jesus the Christ was created out of a wealth of folklore by people who seemed to understand what would appeal to the most primitive and superstitious depths of human yearning. The eagerness with which so many people flocked to that symbol and the tenacity with which they clung to it suggests that Paul and his compatriots may have been right on the mark in reading the psychological signs of their times. (Regardless of the appeal of the faith to certain classes of people, it must be noted that much of the West was Christianized with the sword to the tune of the words, "Baptism or death!" Of which, more later.)

Over 2000 years ago, a doomed Messiah-pretender named Joshua, in whose image—to a degree, at least—the legendary biblical Jesus was later created, worked for and apparently expected the arrival of the Kingdom of Heaven, with the Servant of Yahweh ruling over the entire world, *in his lifetime*. It did not happen as he had dreamed. He died instead, perhaps on a cross, possibly contemplating the Miracle that never occurred along with the melancholy conclusion that Yahweh had abandoned the Jewish people. ("My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Israel?")

From this insignificant occurrence, this Messianic failure, another miracle, the resurrection, was assembled by the architects of Christianity. Otherwise, the Messiah-pretender Joshua would have been lost in the mists of the past forever like so many of the religious zealots of the ancient world who lived and labored and suffered and died, and were then swallowed up by history.

But one of those Joshuas (or Jesuses) was snatched from the grave by imaginative, eagerly ambitious people, who turned him into a savior-god—the Christ—and etched his name forever in the annals of mankind. As Charles Guignebert, for twenty-five years professor of the History of Christianity in the Sorbonne, explains:

> The rise of the Galilean prophet marks the beginning, however accidental, of the religious movement from which Christianity sprang. The lowly spring which pours a slender trickle over the stones neither promises nor foresees the great river to which it gives rise; nevertheless, from it the river has its origin and being.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

The Much-Abused Romans

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

(Genesis 2:18.)

It is good for a man not to touch a woman . . . For I (Paul) would that all men were even as I myself . . . It is good for them if they abide even as I.

(I Corinthians 7:1, 7, 8.)

At this point, I feel constrained to say a few words about the "morally bankrupt" and "socially corrupt" gentile world of the Romans, a portrait which has been grossly overdrawn by Christian apologists.

The Christian Establishment has always had a vested interest in portraying virtually everything in Roman society during the early centuries (when the new cult was struggling to survive) as about as evil and degenerate as anything on earth. Early on, the Christians must have learned from the Jews that a counterfeit crown of martyrdom used for personal gain would pay enormous dividends.

As a part of the ideological warfare waged by Christians, therefore, it was deemed essential that the adversarial Roman world be pictured as "brutally repressive". . . "utterly repugnant" . . . "hopelessly corrupt" . . . "with all the vices of heathenism" . . . a degenerate age "standing unintelligent before the ruins of its faith" . . . with a social fabric that was "a festering mass of rottenness" . . . in which "aristocracy was demoniac" . . . "city life was hell" . . . "no crime was left unperpetrated" . . . and "even virgins were guilty of inconceivable immodesty."

As always, there is some truth in claims of this sort; but the complaints are sweepingly hysterical rather than logically measured. And doesn't society in every age present the most startling contrasts? It is highly unlikely that the Romans were that Satanic. Always ignored is the fact that the general tone of the age was inspired by the Stoic ideal of the brotherhood of all men—one of the more pernicious modes of belief adopted by the Christians, incidentally. (The brotherhood ideal wasn't fully implemented, of course. But how could it ever be—outside of Christian or Marxian fantasies, that is.)

Were the Christians persecuted for their beliefs, and their beliefs alone?

They would like for us to think so; and that is what they have always taught. (Exaggerated dramatizations like *Ben Hur* have served the Christians in much the same way that complaints about persecution have served the Jews.) But it simply is not true that they were a totally blameless religious sect, and that they were intolerantly abused solely because of their creed of worship.

From the beginning, Christians gave the impression that they were secret conspirators combined for nefarious purposes. They were probably regarded as magicians since they openly boasted of their power over demons—a *dangerous* and *provocative* attitude considering the awesome and widespread superstitious belief in demons and devils.

Admittedly, the Romans thought of the Christians as no more than slaves, criminals and degenerates. To the Emperor Hadrian, they were astrologers, soothsayers and quacks, along with the Rulers of the Jewish synagogues and the Samaritans. Everywhere the Christians could be found, they preached against idols, against war and for an equality that the philosophers feared would reduce all people to the same level of mediocrity. They banded together in illegal societies, a form of social behavior which carried the same punishment as treason, death; and they constantly wailed that the end of the world was nearly upon them.

If the Christians were despised, it was because of their universal claims rather than their creed. With arrogance and audacity they proclaimed that Christ must *be* all and *in* all. They were a new people, they claimed, a new race whose citizenship was not in the Roman empire or in any part of the world. They were the new priests appointed to *all* peoples, races and nations. There was only one God, one Christ, one spirit of grace, and anyone on earth who believed in any other God or in any other spirit of grace was corrupt and diseased and totally wrong.

With supreme arrogance the Christians set themselves above the Roman empire; they took no interest in the affairs of the nation. Instead, they preached about another king and his imminent coming, and of an even greater kingdom, as they hurled the grossest insults—Babylon, the Harlot, or the Beast—at Imperial Rome. They divided families, they weakened the martial spirit of the soldier, they treated with contempt and abhorrence the religious observances of the state and the household. They considered their religion to be the legitimate heir of all goodness. They preached that the final revelation of God in history was near, and that the emperors and the people of property would be replaced by the lowest of the low and the poorest of the poor.

They openly denounced the folly of worshiping and deifying the emperor, with which all other peoples except the Jews were perfectly willing to comply. (There was a special exemption for the Jews. In deference to their beliefs, coins were minted for them with a simple and inoffensive superscription, without the emperor's head.) And as their ranks grew in number, their denunciation became even more frenzied and violent. The book called Revelation chronicles that furious hatred.

As for the famous persecutions (the throwing of helpless Christians to the lions, and the like), some scholars believe that for thirty years after Nero there were none; and Gibbon has proved that the Christians experienced no persecution till the time of Diocletian. Others believe that hardly any per-

secutions took place before the 3rd century. The ten persecutions enumerated by Historians of Christianity are said to be fiction, and even those actions taken by Domitian have been proved to be largely a figment of Christian imagination.

Who among us has not heard of the nasty Nero who supposedly burned down Rome and enjoyed it so much that he played a musical instrument while the flames leaped and crackled in the distance. Afterwards, we are told, he blamed the poor, innocent (always wronged and never wrong) Christians for that terrible crime. Tacitus and Suetonius are among those who have been considered to be reliable sources for the burning story; but only Tacitus connects it with "persecution." The Christian historian Eusebius wrote in the 4th century that "Nero . . . burned a great part of the city," and Tacitus relates that Nero inflicted "exquisite tortures" on the Christians.

It is entirely possible, however, that these sources were prejudiced. Modern scholars find them untrustworthy for the very pertinent reason that the infamous persecutions are nowhere alluded to in Christian literature until after the publication of Tacitus' *Annals*. This overemphasis on persecution may be an example of how well the early Christians were perfecting the technique of psychological warfare. Hardly anything ever works better than that good, old "I am always oppressed!" ploy.

Not that Nero didn't have reason to look with some displeasure on the obnoxious Christians. They were forever announcing the speedy return of their Christ and the subsquent destruction of Rome and its emperor. (Hardly the best way to win friends and influence people in that nervous day and time.) If Nero did persecute the Christ cult in one form or another, there is reason to believe that he treated them as social criminals or nuisances. Mommsen sums it all up best with the statement that persecution in the first two centuries was largely a matter of policing, dictated not by religious intolerance but rather by political considerations.

But the times they were a-changing, and with the accession of Constantine and the official recognition of Christianity by the State with the doctrines and dogmas of the Church supported by the rulers of the Empire, the Christians soon believed themselves to be the masters of the Empire; and they promptly took steps to obliterate their enemies. Before long, theologians—speaking with the fullest possible authority for a Church supreme in its egoism, that argued like a child and persecuted like a Titan—were able to preach with smug solemnity that philosophy was the "patriarch of all heresies."

As the members of a newly-formed intolerant theocracy known as organized religion, the Christians soon demonstrated that they would tolerate no rivalry in the domination of the human soul. Full legal rights ceased to exist for all but the orthodox. Not only pagans, but even dissident Christians were persecuted. In the name of Jesus "meek and mild," a symbol of joy on earth and good will among men, the Church committed crimes that surmounted even the crimes of Imperial Rome with the amount of human blood that was shed over myths. From emotional expression to emotional suppression in a quick four century leap.

Part and parcel of the broad attack on anybody and anything disagreeable

to them was the merciless assault on paganism. Not a single account of the pagan mystery cults has come down to us. However zealous the pagans may have been in keeping their rites and mysteries secret, surely some of them should have survived—except possibly for one thing: The Christians destroyed their books of rituals and everything else they could get their hands on. Some of the authorities on the mystery religions suggest that this loss represents one of the most unfortunate negative events of the period. Earlier in this century, L. Cerfaux championed the belief that certain Jews in Alexandria were organized into a Jewish mystery cult and practiced a non-normative Kyrios mysticism. But who knows for sure, since so little information about the pagan mystery religions is available.

Pagan is a fascinating word. Originally, *paganus* was the Roman word for "country person." Perhaps it was used in much the same way that a city-bred American might refer in a derogatory sense to a "hill-billy" or a "country bumpkin." But the Roman Church appropriated the word and applied it to all heathen people—all non-Christian people, that is, with the exception of Jews (and later, Moslems), who worshiped false gods. To the Christians, the mystery cultists were all pagans; the Greeks were pagans; even Plato and Pythagoras, regardless of any influence on Philo and Paul, were pagans; and the Romans were the most heathenish pagans of them all.

Numerous great writers and poets working in the English language have found the word *pagan* intriguing. "Neither having the accent of Christians, nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man . . ." comes from Shakespeare. In Dryden's words: "And all the rites of pagan honor paid." "I'd rather be a pagan suckled in a creed outworn," writes Wordsworth, "so might I . . . hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn." And in Matthew Arnold, we read, ". . . the life-giving and joy-giving power of nature, so fondly cherished by the pagan world."

As a godless advocate of what Christians call "pernicious individualism," I feel a certain twinge of envy regarding the relationship of the pagans with their gods—a general outlook that differed markedly from that of the Christians, who took their one God seriously to the point of fanaticism. They were forever in a constant frenzy over the coming of their King who would destroy Rome. And not just for the Romans were there Gods and rumors of Gods. Nearly everywhere in the ancient world there were gods who were involved in nearly everything.

Epona watched over the stable, Neptune the ship, Mercury the merchant, Jupiter the sky, Vesta the hearthfire, Saturn the growing seed, Edulia the sucking babe, and Domiduca the bride. Cybele and Isis were popular in Rome. In Egypt, Osiris and Attis; in Syria, Adonis. Dionysus, the lighter of nocturnal feasts, Sophocles, the lighter of stars, and Nonnus the night-shining one, were popular not only in Athens but also in Thebes, in Thrace and elsewhere.

Among the Roman gods there were Februus, who assisted women to be fertile; Mena presided over the menses; Virginensis presided over the rape of the stone-god's penis; Volupia provided pleasure during copulation; Pertunda was on hand to oversee the first copulation; after conception, Fluonia stopped menstruation; Rumina saw to it that breasts would fill with milk; Nona was responsible for the date of birth; Vagitanus opened the child's

mouth for its first cry; and there were no end of gods who looked after the child after that, promoting its growth, determining its destiny, and guarding it.

As the reader can easily see, there were not only gods, there were *goddesses;* both men and women had deities to appeal to. Not so in the Christian religion where women could appeal to Jesus, dream about Jesus, make love to Jesus in their fantasies and even be *betrothed* to Jesus when they entered the Church. For male Christians, the nearest thing to a goddess was the Virgin Mary—about as appealing a figure as Little Orphan Annie; hardly a voluptuous Diana, in other words.

Considering the fun and games the ancients had with their gods, along with much intriguing fantasizing, no doubt, it is not difficult to understand why the pagans observed the Christians and their antics with a wonder that bordered on total incredulity.

One woman? *One* God? *One* spirit of grace?

How incredibly dull!!!

But back to the Romans . . .

However corrupt they may have been, of one thing we can be certain: They really knew how to throw a dinner party—a several-dinners-at-one-sitting party, in fact, since, with an occasional time-out to regurgitate (vomiting was the surest way to show approval of the art of the cook and the hospitality of the host), a guest could return emptied and cleansed and ready to feast again.

Imagine for a moment that you have been invited for an evening's delicious debauchery by that eminent glutton Tiberius, who once feasted for two days and two nights without rising. At one of his playboy-mansion dinner parties, for instance, you could find on the extensive menu, oysters stewed in garum, along with figpeckers, African snails, mussels, Libyan truffles, honey, sauces, pastries, wines, fruits, raw brains in jelly, a paste made of camel-heels, tongues of flamingoes and other birds, ostrich wing flesh, breast of dove and thrush, livers of geese, and a delectable concoction of sow-livers, teats and vulva in a thick syrup of figs.

Of the main dishes, there would be chicken covered deep with a sauce of anise seed, mint, lazerroot, vinegar, dates, the juices of salted fishguts, oil and mustard seed. There would be many kinds of fish, all heavily spiced, rich and dripping; sow's udder floating in a thick jelly that would smell of coriander; roast venison, pig, fowl and hare; and innumerable sausages and pickled or spiced meats.

A dish in great demand during the time of Tiberius was a jelly of sow-livers that had been fattened on figs (the famous gourmet Apicius came up with that delicacy)—really lip-smacking fare, especially when downed with a flagon or two of sweet, thick wine mixed with boiled honey and heavy cream.

Of wines, there would be only the choicest: old crusted Alban and Setine; the famous Falernian vintage of Opimius, said to be a hundred years old; light Coptos to aid the digestion; the exquisite Mareotic to be used as a diuretic; the dark yellow Teniotic, which aroused carnal passions; the wine of Phocis that supposedly stimulated the mental facilities; or the thick, heavy Laconia; or the white wines of Lesbos and Thasos that supposedly delighted

Apollo; or the elegant, and ever-popular Chian, always capable of blending congenially with hot spices and sauces drenched in oil.

There is a certain technique to be observed when feasting Roman-style. You lie belly downward on a couch; you feed ravenously with both hands, reaching out for the food heaped on tables; and, from time to time, you sort of turn from side to side to relieve the pressure on your ever-swelling abdomen. It is always helpful, too, if shapely young slave boys are available to assist you. You can use their long hair as napkins to wipe your dripping fingers. (Slave girls would be my preference; but, different strokes, etc., etc.)

Not that it was all pickled peaches and cream laced with honey and syrup, though. Heaven forbid!

There were always egregious hypocrites like Valerius slinking about expressing their contempt for wealth and unrestrained ambition and preaching that the austere life of self-denial was the only way. But they were a lot like modern-day liberals who rage against tax loopholes but who never pay taxes because of their own loopholes (foundations, for instance); who advocate total integration but who send their own kids to private schools; and who lament the abuses of the imperial presidency while scheming to become the next emperor of the United States. (Such people will always be with us, I fear.)

Say what you will about those noble Romans, I'm inclined to believe that anybody who can throw a good orgy can't be completely off the wall.

CHAPTER THIRTY

Jesus

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

(Matthew 10:34.)

The word which God sent unto the children of Israel preaching peace by Jesus Christ . . .

(Acts 10:36.)

It is, in the main, rather a simple tale—the story of Jesus the Nazarene as related in Mark, the New Testament book believed by most scholars to be the first of the four Gospels.

There was a Jew named Jesus. He was baptized by one named John. He spent forty days in the wilderness fighting demons. Then he gathered a few disciples around him and wandered about, preaching repentance and the coming of the kingdom. He worked many wonders, casting out demons and devils, healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, walking on water, and multiplying a fish or a loaf by the thousands.

He went up to Jerusalem where one of his disciples, a man named Judas Iscariot, betrayed him for a sum of money. Sensing that he would soon die, Jesus gathered his disciples around him and they ate a last meal together; and he told them that the bread they ate was his body, and the wine they drank was his blood. Then he told them that he would rise and go before them into Galilee, and that the one named Peter would deny him.

Next, he went to Gethsemane (not a flower-bed garden, but an olive orchard, and such an orchard may have extended over an entire hillside) to pray. While there, he was seized, brought to trial, condemned to die. They mocked him, spat on him, scourged him, and hanged him between two thieves. Above his head were these words: THE KING OF THE JEWS. (Remember, this is Mark's story.)

Then Jesus was taken down and entombed. At sunrise the next day, the two Marys and a Salome visited the tomb and found it empty. They mourned and wept, but a young man at the tomb told them that Jesus had risen from the dead. (That conveniently available young man was clothed in a long white garment—the usual Jewish description of angels.) Before long, Jesus appeared before Mary Magdalene and at least two of his disciples. Later still, he appeared before eleven of them to ask that they proclaim the glad tidings and cast out demons and speak in strange tongues. Soon the disciples

of Jesus found that they could take up serpents or drink deadly poisons and not be harmed.

Finally, after directing his disciples to carry on for him, Jesus ascended into heaven where he was warmly received and permitted to sit on the right hand of God.

We know now what *Jesus* the *Christ* is—the legendary product of many minds working under an obsessive religious impulse. In Frazer's words: "The rite created the god."

But what is *Jesus* the *Nazarene*?

We can only speculate since there is not a single shred of trustworthy evidence that there ever was a Jesus of the Gospels: a person, that is, to whom all the Gospel legends are directly related—a *historical* Jesus who was born in Nazareth (or Bethlehem), who was one of Caesar's subjects, and who was put to death by the soldiers of Pontius Pilate. For whatever they are worth, the Gospels provide the *only* evidence supporting the historicity of Jesus. The Gospels can only be tested in human ways, of course; but they must not be tested in *modern* ways alone. We are light years away from the Palestine of twenty centuries ago, and any attempts to recreate that world *in the contemporary image that we would like it to be* would be neither scholarly nor true. The story of the Nazarene must not be restricted to the kind of thoughts and language of which we are capable. Keep in mind, too, that the closer one gets to truth, the farther one gets from orthodoxy.

What must be avoided is the tendency to approach the study of the origins of Christianity and the development of the Bible with partial honesty or selective objectivity. Many people—including some reputable historians—do just that. They carefully choose the elements of the story they wish to believe and those they wish to reject. They suppress the unfavorable and argue merely from the favorable. They critically examine one aspect of theology and uncritically accept mythological claims that support another. They can be thoroughly historical in one area and idealistically naïve in another. They might accept supernatural and miraculous events in the New Testament and deny them in the Old Testament. They might favor the New Testament "loving" God over the Old Testament "vindictive" God, or the human Jesus over the supernatural Christ. They might support the authenticity of the Old Testament over the New, or Christianity over Judaism, or the reverse of either of these.

The investigator who would attempt to free history from some of its deforming myths must be careful to avoid partial honesty and selective objectivity—IF his prejudices and interests will permit it. He must attempt to be thoroughly historical in method and aim. He must prevent his detachment from being sabotaged by his prepossessions.

It is not always easy.

Within the area with which we are dealing here, for instance, parts of the Gospel stories evoke a pleasant and haunting image of that "gentle Nazarene" conjuring the Kingdom of Heaven down to earth by the spell of the infinite tenderness radiating from him—the image that seems to appeal to so many among us. But this is a one-sided, simplistic view of the character who is so loosely portrayed by the Evangelists. There are *many* Jesuses in the four Gospels. Jesus is many men who becomes one man in the minds

of his admirers. Obviously then, when we speak of the "gentle Nazarene," we are not referring to the Jesus who cursed the fig tree during an infantile tantrum. We do not mean the Jesus who commanded that his disciples come to him filled with hatred for their relatives; nor are we talking about the obsessively Jewish Jesus who came only "to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

We are referring instead to the gentle and tolerant Jesus who preached that curious "turn-the-other-cheek/love-your-enemies" philosophy. We are referring to the Jesus of Tschaikovsky and Schweitzer who saw him as a being filled with feeling of love and pity for mankind . . . to the Jesus of Couchoud to whom he was "beautiful, strong and good" . . . to the Jesus of Reinhard, Hess and Paulus to whom he was the "admirable revealer of true virtue" . . . to the Jesus of the French scholar Ernest Renan who saw him as a winsome teacher, living and loving under the blue skies of Galilee, full of the nature and the fragrance of the country—the same imaginative Renan who tried with his literary skill to make the reader hear with him in the whispering of the reeds the eternal melody of the Sermon on the Mount.

For nearly two thousand years people have wondered about Jesus. Thousands of books have been published in hundreds of languages on the Nazarene and related subjects. Because of the extreme poverty and confusion of the Gospel contents, we know absolutely nothing *for certain* about the personality of Jesus, or about the facts of his life, or about his teaching, or about his career. Regarding what he knew, felt or taught, we can only *speculate,* because each saying attributed to him is merely a copy of something said or written previously. We do not know for sure when he died. The Asiatic Christians said the fourteenth of Nisan, their opponents the fifteenth. We do not even know for sure the language he spoke. Was it Akkadian? Or Aramaic? Was he fluent in Greek? Of the 27 books in the New Testament, only four make any mention of the life of the Nazarene. There is no unfolding life story, no chronological outline of the story of the man who supposedly was so important that he changed the face of the world. There is just as little in the Gospel stories—wrapped up in myths and replete with contradictions, as they are—to support the human Jesus as there is to support the supernatural Christ. Nonetheless, scholars from Celsus to Compte to Nietzsche to Schweitzer have persisted in telling the world not what they *knew* about Jesus, but what they *believed.*

Indeed, so little is known about Jesus the man—his life, his appearance, his brothers and sisters, and so on—that it appears as if he had been briefly sketched in as the result of an after-thought. One might logically ask why he was not made a more provable character.

There are some answers.

First, as explained in Chapter 28, the *Christ* of dogma was far more important to the builders and shapers of Christianity than the Jesus of history. Second, never in the wildest of their dreams would the early Christians ever have considered that some day far into the future, skeptics would question the very existence of the man born of a virgin who was also their savior-god. How they would have howled in anger and disbelief at the slightest suggestion of such a blasphemous thought. Because the god was more im-

portant than the man they gave little or no thought to the provability of the man.

Bearing in mind the paucity of the evidence, consider the vast and variant range of opinions regarding Jesus:

He was an impostor . . . He was not even a Jew but had an Aryan father . . . He was the consummation of nature's order . . . He was a hybrid tainted at birth . . . He was the admirable revealer of true virtue . . . He was a paranoiac, a man subject to delusions, a man with monstrous thoughts and visions . . . He was an epileptic, an ecstatic, a sickly and contemptible weakling . . . Jesus rejected both religion and morality . . . He was a widower with a son . . . He was a propagandist for the Essenes . . . He was a sentimental moralist, an eschatological fanatic, a rabbi, a tool of a secret order . . . In no way was he an ascetic . . . He was a revolutionary who for a time seized the temple, a teacher who opposed formalism in Judaism . . . He was a charismatic evangelist who was also an exorcist . . . He did not preach a new faith, he remained a loyal Jew, he had no thought of breaking with the faith of his fathers . . . Jesus taught no dogma of any sort, not anything resembling the sacraments of the Church . . . He established no forms or ceremonies nor formulated laws . . . He wrote no book, appointed no officers, and established no institutions . . . He left no writings of any description, no code or law, no form of theology . . . He was not the founder of Christianity.

Among the authors whose comments are particularly worth noting are the following:

Cornill saw in Jesus "the end and turning point in the history of humanity."

"We know him quite well," says Professor Heinrich Weinel. (Really?)

Neumann says that in all history never has a "character so clearly outlined, so vivid, so uniquely original as that of Jesus been invented."

"He was not teacher, not casuist," declares Schweitzer; "He was an imperious ruler. It was because He was so in His inmost being that He could think of Himself as the Son of Man."

"Jesus has done more to solve the problems of the world, both theoretical and practical," enthuses McCown, "then anyone else who has ever lived."

"At long last," says Olmstead in a biography, "Jesus makes his own appearance in the full light of history."

But G. Stanley Hall defines the unsuspected mythology of this theology best of all:

> He is at bottom what we most profoundly feel him to be.

How could so many people profess to know *so much* when there is *so little* evidence to go on?

What do we *really know* about the Nazarene, as opposed to what we *think,* or *feel*?

Regarding the death of Jesus, only liturgical legends remain. His execution, his suffering, his crucifixion in the morning, his death at the ninth hour—namely, midday—all parallel the countless stories of sacred dramas, serious or comic, narrated in *The Golden Bough,* with the killing of their kings of masquerade, or the mysteries of Osiris, or numerous other divine

heros. (The Passion and Resurrection of Osiris were openly celebrated every year.) The belief that Jesus was supposed to have risen from the dead on the most sacred Sunday in the calendar, the exact date when the sun rises from the night of winter, could not have been the result of a casual coincidence. The same can be said about the crucifixion of Jesus which occurred at the very hour when the paschal lamb was being killed for the Passover meal.

What took place at the trial of Jesus, if there really was such a trial? We do not know.

The Gospel account of the arrest, trial and condemnation of Jesus makes no sense at all from the juridical point of view. None of the charges against him was a mortal sin according to the Law. Baron, a Jew, says that the alleged earlier sentence pronounced by the high priest in Mark "would have been altogether impossible under the then-prevailing legal conditions." And Edersheim, a Catholic Jew, charges that "in their treatment of Jesus, the Sanhedrin violated not only the law of God, but grossly outraged every ordinance of their own traditions." The trial itself could not have occurred on the day before the Sabbath, as the Gospels recount, for it was forbidden to hold court on that day.

Is there a single kernel of fact about the real Jesus to be found anywhere in the Gospels?

It does not seem likely.

We need look no further than the purported beginning of the ministry of Jesus to find ourselves mired in the treacherous quicksands of the Evangelical writings. It is evident that Evangelical estimates of Jesus' age were determined by the value of a *number* rather than by the actual *age* of the individual. Various texts in the Bible attribute a special value to the age of 30. Joseph was 30 when he became Prime Minister; David was 30 when he became King. The eligibility of the Levites at the altar was from 30 to 50 years. So Jesus had to commence his ministry at "about 30 years" of age—exactly the age required by the Law for a Man of God.

Of interest while we are on the subject of numerology is the blatant artificiality of the genealogy of Matthew: exactly 14 generations from Abraham to David; and 14 from David to the exile; and 14 from the exile to Christ. Consider, too, Luke's genealogy going in the opposite direction from Jesus to David to Abraham to Adam—a listing of only 77 names from one end to the other. The basis of this carefully manufactured genealogy is obviously the marvelously magical and influential number *seven*—a great favorite with the Hebrews. Although the origin of the number is unknown, some have thought the source to be the sun, moon and "five planets" but others doubt that people knew of five planets when seven became a holy number.

For Augustus, 7 was the symbol of the spirit, and 7 plus 10, or 17, the symbol of holiness. All the "great dates of the Jewish sacred year" were regulated by the number 7: the sabbatical year, Jubilee year, the year following 7 times 7, sevenfold sprinkling, seven-branched candlestick, forgiveness till seventy times seven; and in the Babylonian story of creation there were 7 winds, 7 spirits of storms, 7 divisions of the underworld, 7 zones of the upper world, and lots more. Aristobulus was a Hellenic Jew.

To him, 7 was a symbol of the logos in man, by which man had knowledge of things human and divine. In short, then, 7 is *kosher*. Stay away from *six*, though. Because it falls just short of seven it carries a sinister meaning. The apotheosis of evil is represented by six upon six upon six. (One can only wonder, I suppose, what six upon nine represented to the ancients!)

Luke's tale about the twelve-year-old Jesus is also rooted in numerological superstition. For three days his parents seek him in the city. At last they find him in the temple delighting the wise men with his intelligence. The numbers in this story are important because *three* is the Messianic figure, and it was at the age of *twelve* that Solomon became king, Daniel came into prominence, and Moses separated himself from his family. So once again, we have a tale rooted in formal convention rather than in an authentic record. (As we recounted earlier Jesus also had to display exceptional wisdom at a young age in order to follow in the footsteps of the god-boy Horus and others.)

In the writings of Josephus, any number of Galilean towns and villages are enumerated, enough to give the impression that he was very well informed on Galilean affairs; but the name of Nazareth is nowhere to be found in his works. Neither is it found in the Jewish Bible nor in the Talmudic literature. It is said that the *root* of Nazareth, NSR, occurs 63 times in the Old Testament as meaning a protector; Na-sa-Ru is found seven times in the Code of Hammurabi; and the Syrian form Nasaryu means God is protector. As for the name Nazareth itself, no ancient writing either pagan or Jewish mentions it. Only in Acts and the Gospels is it named, and in none of the other canonical texts.

Perhaps Nazareth was such an obscure little town, it was unknown to and unnoticed by anyone of importance who was chronicling the events of the time. (There is in Galilee today, writes Guignebert, a little town containing from three to four thousand inhabitants which some Christians believe to be the town spoken of in the Gospels. It is located in a little open valley high up in the group of mountains which bound the plain of Esdraelon on the north. More precisely, however, it is call *En-Nasira*.)

On the other hand, Nazareth may be part of the whole process of the mythification that Jesus underwent. The consonants of NETZER (according to another theory) were taken by the authors of Mark and interpreted as a prophecy referring to Nazareth so it could be said that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee. But Luke sends Joseph and the pregnant Mary to Bethlehem in Judea where the birth of Jesus will fulfill another prophecy. To escape the wrath of Herod, Joseph and Mary flee with the infant Jesus to Egypt to fulfill the purported Hosea prophecy—"Out of Egypt have I called my son" (Israel). The slaughter of the children by Herod in fear of Jesus as a rival is an obvious parallel to one of the sun-god myths. Only Matthew mentions it; and Josephus, who was no fan of Herod, was ignorant of it. Obviously, it never happened.

With revelations of this nature in mind, it is difficult to conclude that *anything* written about Jesus by the Evangelists or *any* of the early Christians is trustworthy.

In fact, so little is known about Jesus that trying to determine if he was a gentile who came from the "land of gentiles" known as Galilee, or if he

had a fair complexion, fair hair and blue eyes according to a letter supposedly written in the 3rd century, or if Mary his mother was a member of the non-Israelitic tribe of Asher (born in Zebulon just six miles from Nazareth!?!), are exercises in obnoxious futility outside the range of any respectable scholarly concern.

Worth noting, though, is the controversy among Christians regarding the appearance of their savior-man-god.

By the 5th century Augustine was complaining that there was no authentic portrait of Jesus called the Christ. Over the first few centuries he had been variously represented as being dwarfed, ugly and sometimes repulsive. Justin Martyr and Tertullian gave the impression that he was ungainly and short of stature. Cyril described him as being mean of aspect *even beyond the ordinary race of men*. To Basil he was the *ugliest* of men. Justin said he had neither beauty nor dignity. Irenaeus characterized him as *infirmus, ingloriosus,* and *indecorus*. Origen said he was small, insignificant and ill-favored. Commodian said he looked like a slave, a judgement with which Tertullian, Cyprian and Hyppolytus agreed. It was even said in the early days that he may have been a leper. Not surprisingly, he was represented on some early Christian sarcophagi with distinctly Jewish features.

For many centuries the Christians quarreled over his appearance. But finally the partisans of ugliness lost ground to Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome and others who believed that his appearance should be above the common mean rather than below it; and by the Middle Ages the myth-makers were laboring overtime to transform Jesus into a handsome, straight-nosed idol. The medieval forgery known as the Letter of Lentulus—believed for centuries to have been written much earlier—describes Jesus as having a venerable face without wrinkle or blemish, curling hair the color of ripe chestnuts, a luxuriant beard of the same color, expressive and brilliant eyes, and a faultless nose and mouth; he could be cheerful without ceasing to be grave; he often wept but never laughed; and with words taken practically verbatim from Isaiah that would do justice to a Hollywood press agent, he was summed up as being "the fairest of the children of men."

The name Jesus is thought to be merely the mystery-drama name of the god. There are many names: Jehua, Joshua, Jesus—all the same name according to some scholars, who define it to mean Yahweh the Savior. Others say that Jesus is really Isehouah, or Ieshou, in Hebrew, and that Isehouah means "salvation." Therefore Jesus is literally Salvation. To Justin Martyr, Joshua was the name of God himself. Jeshuah is derived from the more ancient form Jehoshua, or Joshua. The ancient form of the name reappeared in its new form about 340 B.C. and by the beginning of the Christian era it had become very common among the Jews. It originally meant, "Yahweh is help," or "the help of Yahweh." Hence Joshua in Hebrew, Yeschu in Syrian, which is close to the Hebrew Yischak, or Issac, Iesous in Greek, Jesus in Latin—the personal name of the Heavenly Man, the *christos* who was to be the deliverer and the supernatural judge in the coming Kingdom of God.

Eventually the surname "the Nazarene" came to be constantly associated with the name of Jesus. In a passage in Acts the miraculous cure of the lame man is performed to the accompaniment of these words: "In the name of

Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, arise and walk." Note that the name *Jesus* is used along with the title *Christ,* which proclaims the Messianic rank of the Lord, and the surname, the *Nazarene*—three words forming an inseparable combination believed by the Christians to possess magical power.

The curious term "son of man" occurs eighty-one times in the four Gospels. What does it mean?

Is it a substitute for the pronoun I? Was it intended to teach the human as distinct from the divine nature of the Messiah? Did it indicate a lowly position? Did Jesus use the term (*bar nasha*) to conceal his Messianic destiny? Numerous scholars believe that the term means simply *man*. Some believe that it is a definite and recognized Messianic title; others that it designates the "corporate personality" of the saints of the Most High. Wellhausen thinks Jesus never applied the title to himself; Klausner says Jesus always called himself "the son of man," meaning simple flesh and blood. But Bacon calls the placing of the title in Jesus' mouth as applying to himself "a manifest anachronism." Some like Finklestein go to Ezekiel, thinking he invented the term "for God's address to him, to signify that even the divine messenger appears before his Master as only one of the multitude." It has been suggested that Daniel provides the answer: "The son of man is the divinely invested bearer of the Kingdom that descends from above . . ." But there is reason to believe that the book of Daniel means that *Israel* (the Jewish nation) is both the divinely invested bearer of the Kingdom and the son of man. Other scholars see the term evolving from pagan sources. Among the Phrygian Ophites, "a Man and a Son of Man" were said to be the origin of all subsequent things. In the Avestic literature of Persia, Gayomort, the son, is conceived of as both the pattern and the source of the whole human race. And "a man" was a highly regarded figure in the mythology of Babylonia. Most scholars agree that the idea of "the divine man" was deeply felt in the Hellenistic-Roman era. But Lake describes the "son of man" term as being unintelligible in Greek and suggests that it was "quite as obscure to the generation of Greek Christians which produced the present Gospels as it is to ourselves."

And thus it is that we are confronted with another enigma, which, like the image of Jesus, or Joshua, is at bottom what people most profoundly feel it to be.

Could Joshua the Nazarene have been a rabbi? (Someone who contributed to the book of John seemed to think so.)

At first thought, the answer would seem to be no. A monumental attempt is made in the Gospels to divorce Jesus from the religion of the Jews. But consider for a moment the 150 years preceding the beginning of what we now call the Christian era, when heretical Messiah-pretenders were being put to death for their activities by Jewish priest-kings. Without doubt, some, if not most of those men, were rabbis carried away by religious fervor. In all probability, the Joshua who became the model for the Christian savior-god was one of those Messianic zealots. (Of which, more later.)

What stands out about the Jesus of the Gospels, even though he is indignantly involved in that little drama about the money-changers and dove-sellers, is his *philosophical schizophrenia*—his anti-Jewishness versus a very distinct element of pro-Jewishness. (There is no evidence that the Jews ever

allowed the sellers of anything into their temples. Considering the fixed and complicated orthodox ritual of the Palestinian Jews in which the Mishnah laid down no fewer than 39 principal classes of prohibitions, and in which the rabbis counted 248 classes of things to be done and 365 things forbidden, it is not likely that money-changing or dove-selling ever came within a Galilean mile of the temple. The story about the expelling of the merchants from the temple was fabricated for the purpose of contributing to the "new wine" image of Jesus as opposed to his being thought of as just a carbon copy of the "old wine" of Judaism.)

Admittedly, the liberalism of Jesus seems to outweigh by far his doctrinaire Judaism. That is the image we have of him today; the image so many seem to prefer; the image of "the gentle Nazarene who preached a simple doctrine." Millions of people in the Western world believe in the Christ myth. Many others, disturbed or repulsed by the ritualistic Christian church, prefer to believe in a Jesus totally separated from the immense orthodox system named after one of his titles. "The true teachings of Christ" (do they really mean the supernatural *Christ,* or do they mean the human *Jesus*?) is a common expression today among those who profess to prefer an egalitarian faith rather than an aristocratic Church. But these believers are just as susceptible to mythological thinking as the Christ worshipers. They have created a Jesus in their minds *in the image of what they would like him to be*—an image that is just as untrue and just as dishonest as any other.

There is nothing simplistic about the philosophical schizophrenia—pro-Jewish and anti-Jewish, pro-Law and anti-Law, liberal and literalistic—of Jesus; but it can be explained.

It seems evident that, from the standpoint of all those who contributed to the devising of the Gospels during the early Christian centuries, Jesus had to be separated from the strict legalism of the Jews. He had to be liberalized almost to the point of radicalism through the stressing of the principles behind the Law along with a measure of freedom in its application to life. He had to represent views and attitudes that were less ascetic in his manner of living and less representative of a closed, secretive, exclusivistic outlook. He had to be portrayed as being more peaceful in spirit than militaristic, more concerned with moral and spiritual values than with the ceremonial aspects of sacred days, seasons, strict conformity to the solar calendar and ritual ablutions. And he had to manifest attitudes emphasizing the loving of one's enemies rather than hating them, along with an espousal of the belief in the brotherhood of all mankind as opposed to the practice of racial exclusivity found among the Jews.

Scarcely anything could be less indicative of the formalistic rigor of the rabbis than the portrait of Jesus just drawn. When the Synoptics were being compiled, the arch-enemy of the Christian brethren was the Jewish rabbi, who embodied the offense and unbelief of Israel. It would appear then, that many of those who contributed to the Gospels during the first four hundred years made Jesus the mouthpiece of their animosity.

Still, the Jesus who emerges from the Gospels is sufficiently a Jew not to contest the lawfulness of the function of the teacher of the Law, which is to "sit in Moses' seat" and explain and comment on the Law. He was enough of a racially exclusive Jew to forbid his disciples to declare to the

Gentiles the coming of the Kingdom of God. He never disparaged the Sabbath, nor did he speak of doing away with it. And he regarded himself as having a message for *no one but the Jews*—as the texts unequivocally acclaim:

> "Go nowhere among the Gentiles . . . but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
>
> "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God, the Lord is one . . ."
>
> "It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs" (meaning Gentiles).
>
> "Think not that I have come to abolish the Law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them."
>
> "I am sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Even Saint Paul wrote that Jesus was "born of the Law," a statement that affirmed without qualification that Jesus was supposed to be a devout Jew.

How remarkable that such strongly pro-Jewish texts should be found in Gospels which contain such large doses of what Guignebert calls "the generally anti-Jewish pro-pagan tendency of the Evangelists . . ." But the Gospel authors were too much the products of their own times to completely write the Jewishness out of the rabbinical Joshua they chose to immortalize. "Accordingly," as Guignebert explains, "for these texts to have survived the doubtless rigorous process of selection and editing implies that they were very early elements too solidly embedded in the tradition as handed down to be tampered with."

For the sake of contrast, consider how far the Gospel writers range *from* the Jewishness of Jesus when they have him participate in the Last Supper. No Jew could ever have said to his associates that they should *drink his blood*. The primitive fear of blood pollution was so obsessive and overwhelming to Jews (beyond anything we can conceive of today) that even a symbolic meaning of the rite that the eating of the body and the drinking of the blood was supposed to represent would have aroused horror and revulsion in the Jews of the time. (Can anyone really believe that the Jesus who proclaimed that he had come to fulfill the Law actually participated in such a ceremony?) This mythological sun-god tale was added to the Gospels by gentile Christians long removed from the Semitic genesis of the faith.

Another attempt to separate Jesus from Judaism occurs when Matthew has Jesus offer his followers a way to salvation different from that of the rabbis: "For I say unto you, that except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you shall in no case enter the kingdom of Heaven."

For obvious reasons, Jewish scholars have observed the Christian Jesus and his teachings with more than casual interest; and they have provided some eloquent and variable comments that are worth considering:

The preaching of Jesus was essentially that of the rabbis . . . He was a saintly artisan, of Hillel's type . . . Christian morality had been proclaimed by Jewish prophets and psalmists many centuries before Jesus . . . In almost all of his public utterances he was harsh, severe, and distinctly unjust . . . His radiant personality and humility captivated the masses . . . As a

teacher, very learned in the Law, he was superb . . . Only to a few select and devoted disciples did he reveal himself as the Messiah . . . His purpose as a religious reformer was not to abrogate the Law, but to soften its seeming severity and to elicit its inner spirit . . . He put morals above ritual, inward piety above ceremony . . . He was more of the mystic than the moralist. And in the words of Montefiore, who has written more generously about Jesus than any other Jew, *He was a prophet teaching men to prepare for the coming catastrophe and he was indignant that any ritual law should stand in the way of the higher law of compassion and loving kindness.*

Much more can be said about the curiously contradictory and provocatively schizoid Jesus we have come to know and love. Perhaps we should not dwell on the subject; but since the Christian Establishment claims that *Not only did Jesus speak the truth, he WAS the truth,* it is difficult to avoid belaboring the point that the Jesus of *truth* leaves much to be desired when it comes to consistency.

Jesus judged no man, but he came into the world to judge. He enumerated hardships for his followers, and he told them that his burden was light. He supported every jot and tittle of the Law and he renounced the vengeful tooth for a tooth nature of the Mosaic Law. He said the laborer is worthy of his hire, but the disobedient servant should be beaten with many stripes, and even the servant who was ignorant of his wrongdoing should be beaten with a few stripes. Woe unto you who are rich, he said, as he lived upon the labor of others because he did not work. (Several women supposedly traveled with him and provided for his needs. Perhaps he was portrayed as being kinder to women than was customary for the times so he would not appear to be biting the hands that were feeding him.) While seeming to advocate non-violence among individuals, he spoke placidly of wars and rumors of wars and nations rising up against nations and kingdoms against kingdoms. He preached acceptance of unhappiness as the common lot of man. To Jesus it seemed to be immeasurably better to be poor in spirit (and faint of heart) than to be rich and eager in spirit. (Would stout-hearted and eager-spirited people really have accepted his "repent now the end is near" message? Would the full-spirited person really take no thought of the morrow and care not about his body or what he ate or drank or wore?) He preached honesty, yet he instructed his apostles to be as "wise as serpents and harmless as doves." He drove devils out of one man and into an innocent man's swine causing the animals to rush away to self-destruction. And would it not have been more helpful (considering the legions of alcoholics who populated the centuries that followed) if he had turned wine into water? But like the sun-gods, he had to turn water into wine.

And what of the ignorance of that Jesus of *truth* who believed that diseases were the results of demons and that the application of his spittle could give sight to the blind, the remedy Thoth had used to restore the eye of Horus? Like all the wonder-working men of the time, Jesus used magic and healing as schemes to bend the extraordinary to his uses (or so the story implies)—much like the witch-doctors and con-artists of any age. (Along with magic, the driving of demons from the human body was an equally essential part of the arsenal of the Messiah-pretender; and there were any number of diseases in those days that appeared to be consequences of pos-

session: sudden epidemics, mental disorders, epilepsy, hysteria, gout, rheumatism, St. Vitus' dance, paralysis, even deaf-mutism—a veritable gold mine of pathology for the commonplace Messiah with hands-on experience in the field of abracadabra who could miraculously eliminate demonic possession, or awaken people who appeared to be dead, but who was never known to replace a wooden leg with the real thing.) And what of the Old Testament claims regarding demons, witches, the flatness of the earth, and the stopping of the sun in its celestial track?

We are merely misunderstanding these biblical passages or ideas and not seeing them as simply common bits of understanding at the time of writing, argues the Christian Establishment. Certain beliefs of Jesus and certain statements in the Bible do not belong to the revealed word of God, you see. They are parts of the "earthen vessel," not of the divine "treasure" of revelation. Well into the 19th century Christians still generally held that the Testaments were "inspired" and literally true to the letter of the word. Today's sophisticated Christians, however, have found a way to have their cake and eat it, too. They merely pick and choose what they wish to be known as "revealed truth" and what not. (Faiths like tastes are not to be disputed, we are told. Nonetheless, it is difficult to tolerate the kindergarten variety of rationalization Christians use for reasoning.)

The most pertinent question of all still remains to be answered.

Was Jesus real?

Is there any evidence to support the historical existence of Jesus of Nazareth (or Bethlehem)?

The Christians are quick to point to non-biblical historians who supposedly validate the existence of the Nazarene by writing about his life and the Christian movement.

In particular, Tacitus, a Roman historian who lived from about A.D. 55 to 117 or later, is highly regarded by Christian apologists because he describes certain common Christians and their leader Christ who was put to death in the principate of Tiberius by the Procurator Pontius Pilate.

But where did Tacitus get the information of the execution under Pontius Pilate? There is no way of knowing. To those who think that the source was a report by the Procurator in the State Archives, Tacitus himself reveals that the archives were not available to private individuals. More importantly, it is just possible that the *Annals* of Tacitus can be dated as late as A.D. 115. By that time elements of the Christian tradition would have been sufficiently well known for the testimony of Tacitus to be no more than an echo of popular opinion. As long as this possibility remains, the statements of the Roman historian are worthless.

In his *Life of Claudius,* Suetonius tells of people who were "perpetually stirring up trouble at the instigation of Chrestus." Naturally, this "Chrestus" is considered by some Christians today to be their Jesus Christ. All Suetonius proves, however, is that by the year A.D. 50, or some twenty years *after* the traditional date of the death of Jesus, there were Christians at Rome spreading propaganda among the Jews. And what of the commonality of the name Chrestus among slaves and freedmen of the Roman Empire? It occurs more than eighty times in the Latin inscriptions of Rome.

Pilate is said to have given testimony on the subject of the Christians and

the Passion. Justin was the first to record this belief in an official document. Tertullian followed in his wake. But there is no proof that Justin did anything more than assume that the Pilate report, which the Procurator was supposed to have addressed to Tiberius, actually existed. Tertullian merely took it on trust from Justin, without verification.

Somewhat later, in the fourth or fifth century, a similar document was forged on the authority of Tertullian in which the name of Tiberius was replaced with the name of Claudius.

A further demonstration of the ineptness of Christian forgers is the notorious *letter of Lentulus* (mentioned above), so-called *Governor of Jerusalem,* addressed *to the Senate and People of Rome,* in which the personal appearance and teaching of Jesus is detailed. This forgery is so preposterous and so obviously medieval in origin that even most Christians now shy away from it. There was no "Governor of Jerusalem" in Jesus' day; no Lentulus plays any part whatever in the Jewish history of those times; and in the time of Tiberius a subordinate official would never have ventured to write directly "to the Senate and People of Rome."

An equally incredible letter attesting to the historicity of Jesus was supposedly written *circa* A.D. 112 to the Emperor Trajan by Pliny the Younger, then governor of Bithynia. Pliny tells of Christians in his province whom he had arrested and how they confessed that they held meetings before daybreak to sing to Christ, as God, a hymn in alternating strophes. Guignebert suggests that only "the most robust credulity" would accept this curious account as admissible evidence supporting the existence of Jesus.

The eclectic Platonist Celsus wrote a polemic argument against Christianity near the end of the 2nd century. The essentials of this work have come down to us through Origen's refutation of them in the following century. Any references in this work to Jesus or the Christian movement are worthless because, first, they come to us second-hand; and, second, Celsus, by the end of the 2nd century, would have been acquainted with the pro-Christian evangelical literature.

The Christians are equally quick to avoid mentioning the number of historians writing in the 1st century, *contemporaries* of the Christian Jesus, IF, indeed, he did exist—among them Jews, who were supposed to have been both the target of the wrath of the Nazarene and the object of his pity and prayers—*who ignore Jesus*. "The literature of the time," declares Schechter, "has not left us with a single reference to this controversy." He is referring to such notable authors as Seneca, Petronius, Pliny the Elder, Juvenal, Martial, Quintilian, Epictetus, Plutarch, Appian and Philo. At least some of them should have heard of the man who supposedly *attracted the multitudes*.

Hardly anyone could have been better placed in this historical tangle than Josephus, the Jewish historian who was born around A.D. 37, and who lived for much of the remainder of the century. Yet, the only thing that can be found in his writings about Jesus is an obvious forgery. In his *Jewish Antiquities* he purportedly wrote that "a holy man" called Jesus was crucified by Pilate, and that he appeared to his disciples "after having risen from death on the third day." Josephus adds that the Old Testament "Holy prophets had, moreover, predicted of him these and many other wonders."

Nearly 200 years ago the glaring discrepancies in these statements was

attacked in Europe by the Swiss philologist called Otto. Josephus could never have written those phrases, according to the criticism, for the simple reason that they represented everything that was anathema to an orthodox, intellectual Jew like Josephus: a doomed Messiah who had to be raised from the grave. Nowhere in the Old Testament did any Jewish prophet ever come close to conceiving so repulsive and unholy a scenario. (Josephus' faith in the Jewish Messianic hope is strongly validated by his assertion that the day would come when all men would accept the *Torah*.)

When did the forged insertion take place? Probably in the latter half of the 3rd century, *after* Origen, who read the Josephus work and stated that Josephus did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, and *before* Eusebius, who read it in the 4th century *with* the insertion, and accepted it. To suggest, as some do, that the forgery claim can be given no credence because there was *no difference* between the Jews and those who called themselves Christians 200 years after the traditional birth of Jesus is to ignore the dynamics of the time and the overwhelming urge of the Christians to build a new faith as soon as possible using any and all means. By the time of the fall of Jerusalem, when the temple was destroyed, the separation from Semitism was well developed. Although there was no central authority and no uniformity of practice, the infant faith was standing on its own feet, and the revolutionary spirit of universalism was beginning to pervade the Christian movement.

It has also been suggested that because Josephus was Jewish, his silence on Jesus was rooted in anti-Christian bias. But such people as Gamaliel, Hillel and Jochanan ben Zakkaim, who would surely have been of more consequence in his eyes than Jesus, are also not mentioned. He did speak freely of Jewish movements such as the Pharisees and Sadducees; he totally ignored John the Baptist; and Judas of Galilee he dismissed as a sophist who founded a sect of his own that had nothing in common with the others.

Philo of Alexandria, another Jewish writer, was born about thirty years before the Christian era and lived for a number of years after it began. How is it possible then that he could leave *more than fifty works in which not one single allusion to Jesus or his followers can be found?* Are we expected to believe that just because he lived in Alexandria, he was indifferent to the "momentous, world-changing events" that were supposedly occurring in Galilee?

And what of Justus of Tiberius? He was born in Galilee at about the time of the alleged crucifixion of Jesus. How could he not have encountered people during his lifetime who were powerfully stirred by the preaching and the death of the great Christian Messiah?

Once again, dead silence.

In his two monumental works, a history of the war of independence and a chronicle of events from Moses to Agrippa, not the smallest reference to Jesus the Nazarene or Jesus the Christ can be found.

A Talmudic legend of Jesus was still growing as late as the 5th century. But like the Jewish legend of Mary with the soldier Panthera, or Pandira, a malicious defamation of Mary that was conceived for the purpose of discrediting the virgin birth story by implying that Mary was a harlot and Jesus a bastard child, it was simply a derogatory distortion which began to take

shape much earlier when Christianity and Judaism separated and the adversarial relationship between the two systems began to develop. (Both points of view underlying that antagonism are understandable. To most Jews, Christianity was just another "backsliding" cult "whoring after new gods"; Jesus could never be accepted as the new Messiah; the indiscriminate loving of everybody, including gentiles, was absurd; and a Yahweh who indulged in sentimental goodness was equally absurd. Partly in response to Jewish mockery and contempt, the Christians blamed the Jews, including Herod Antipas, the Jewish tetrarch, for charging, trying and condemning Jesus, and urging Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, to crucify him. Whoever was involved in the construction of that story, however, thought it wise to excuse the powerful Roman official by allowing him to wash his hands of the whole affair—a clever method of letting the Romans off the hook, as it were. Any speculation, therefore, as to which side attacked the other with the most venomous lies would be unworthy of consideration. The grinding of petty axes should be left to those who simplistically attempt to explain by the light of contemporary prejudice things which only the light of history can clarify.)

In the 2nd century, the Christian apologist Justin Martyr described a village near Jerusalem in which Jesus was said to be born. Proof of the birth could be found, he explained, in the registries of taxing under Cyrenius, the Procurator in Judea. In the 4th century Julian "the Apostate" is described by Cyril of Alexandria as having said that Jesus was one of Caesar's subjects, and that he was enrolled with his father and mother in the time of Cyrenius. From these accounts, we are expected to deduce that the Imperial archives of Rome "apparently still contained the census records" that Jesus was born in Judea.

So all the Christians have to offer as proof that Jesus actually lived in the time of Caesar is a *presumption* that certain census records containing his name existed in Rome.

We know now that the census story was added to the Gospels for one reason alone: to fulfill a so-called prophecy. Are we expected to believe that Justin Martyr who lived 200 years after the alleged birth of Jesus had not read the Gospels when he appealed to public census records to demonstrate the existence of the Nazarene? Are we to believe that the emperor Julian was not influenced by the fabricated Gospel story when he cited the census records of Cyrenius? Apparently so. This weak defense is rooted in a great deal of "after the fact" speculation. One would think even the most devout believers would require better justification than that.

If there was a movement initiated by a Jesus in Galilee, it seems obvious that the major thinkers of the time considered it to be insignificant and unworthy of attention. As pathetic as it may seem, the meager phrases of Tacitus, Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, Celsus, and questionable statements attributed to Pilate, are all the world has to offer by way of proof that the crucified rebel written about in a curious work called the New Testament really was the Jesus of history who became the Christ of the Christian Church.

How, then, can the Jesus story be explained?

Was there an inspirational pattern for Jesus? . . . a historical person who formed the basic model around which the Jesus of the Gospels was created?

. . . an archetypal Jesus who performed perhaps a few awe-inspiring tricks, who led perhaps a heretical movement, who aroused perhaps the hatred of a powerful ruler, and who was killed perhaps because of his activities and beliefs?

Many of the most erudite scholars—among them, Bauer, Bolland, Bossi, Dupuis, Kalthoff, Kulicher, Robertson, Van Eysinga, Volney and Whittaker—think not. They are convinced that no such person as Jesus (in *any* form) ever lived. To Volney, Jesus was an astral myth; to Dupuis, the sun; for Kulicher, a vegetation-god; to Bauer, perhaps the first great scholar to deny the historicity, he was a personification of certain ideals then current; to Kalthoff, he was an illusion of reality more compelling than fact itself; and numerous scholars argue that Paul knew only the Christ myth and nothing at all of an historical Jesus. On the other side of this argument are critics like Ernest Renan who totally reject the supernatural elements of the story but who do accept the figure as historic.

What of the numerous stories of Jesus-type characters that have been filtered down through history—Jesus ben Panthera or Pendira, Jesus bar Abbas or Barabbas (son of the father), Jesus son of Ananias, Jesus son of Sapphias, and Jesus son of Gamalas? Some critics like to suggest that the Gospels are merely expanded versions of the life of one of those curious creatures. But the best that can be said about the Jesus sound-alike legends that have come down to us is that they appear to be the products of misinterpreted historical anecdotes provided by Philo or Josephus, or questionable speculations found in the writings of Tacitus, Suetonius, *et al.*, or in sources such as the Talmud; and, setting aside the possibility that certain events in their lives may have appealed to the Evangelists, none of them can be seriously considered as the major inspirational source for the Gospel stories.

To cite but one of these straw men, Jesus son of Ananias was wandering about as late as A.D. 62 crying out endlessly—especially on *festival* days—"Woe to Jerusalem!" Although he was arrested, beaten and scourged, he never changed his mournful tune. When the Roman governor Albinus asked him who and whence he was, he refused to answer with a single word. According to Josephus, who tells the story, Albinus finally declared him a maniac and let him go free. (Here we have a prime example of how events in the life of one of the more demented Messianic zealots of the day may have been incorporated into the Christian Gospels when they were assembled at a later date. Like Jesus son of Ananias, Jesus of Nazareth cries aloud in the temple on the last day of the *feast* of the *Tabernacles*. The author of the Gospel tale then has the governor—Pontius Pilate—ask Jesus, "Whence art thou?" And Jesus refuses to answer with a single word. And thus it was that Jesus son of Ananias may have contributed some of the building blocks to that tower of fabrication known as "Jesus of Nazareth.")

Even though no justifiable historical evidence can be found to support the Jesus of the Gospels, the assumption that there was *no* basic pattern underlying the conception, the gestation and the full blossoming of the compelling Jesus story is difficult to accept. In fact, it would seem to defy logic that such a strongly motivated narrative could be invented without an authentic inspirational pattern somewhere along the line. After all, everything else in Christianity was modeled on outside sources: the sun-god yarns, the

Old Testament writings, pagan writings, and the moral maxims of everyone from Lao Tse to Socrates; so why should the human half of the Christian savior-god be any different? In other words, apart from the modeling of the Christ myth on the mythological sun-gods—flesh and blood must have had some bearing on the story. It is my contention, therefore, that someone who lived and died well before the Christian era began, and whose legend lived and grew after his death, provided the inspirational model for the Jesus of the Gospels.

With the very little trustworthy information we have from the distant past, only one Jesus-type characterization comes close enough to the Gospel stories to suggest that the parallel may be more than coincidence. I am referring to the *Great Teacher* of the Dead Sea Scrolls. (The scrolls were discovered in a Dead Sea Cave in 1947.)

But first, a few historical notes.

For nearly 100 years before Pompey captured Jerusalem in 63 B.C., bringing the 150 miles of Palestine—a tiny country, bordered by sea on one side and mostly by deserts on the other—under Roman rule, Jewish priest-kings ruled Palestine.

In 134 B.C., John Hyrcanus I., son of Simon Maccabeus, became the priest-king of Judea. He conquered most of Palestine, forcibly proselytizing many. The Pharisees fought back and gained a wide following as opponents of the aristocratic Sadducees. In 104 B.C., Aristobulus I. succeeded Hyrcanus and conquered Galilee. Alexander Janneus succeeded his brother Aristobulus as the high priestly ruler of the Jews in 103 B.C. He issued coins with the title "king" on them, and he completed the conquest of Palestine. In violent opposition, the Pharisees led a six-year revolt against Janneus. He crushed the revolt in 90 B.C. and crucified nearly 800 people.

The Sadducees, those who were represented by the Jewish aristocrats led by Janneus, the sons of Mattathias (Judas, Jonathan and Simon Maccabeus), and other priest-kings, may have originated in a reaction against the Pharisees. The Sadducees were less dedicated and reactionary religionists. The harshly orthodox Pharisees were literalistic and formalistic in the extreme. The legion of the laws in the Pentateuch were not enough for them. They added their own further commands. As for the multitudes who were ignorant of the Law, the Pharisees considered them accursed and doomed.

The disruptive schism between the Sadducees and the Pharisees widened even further when the Jewish high priests declared themselves to be military and political kings. Many Jews resented and objected to this arbitrary ascension to power and a number of them went so far as to withdraw into the wilderness and form the Qumran community—the people who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls. (Significantly, *the scrolls do not mention the Christian Messiah,* Jesus called the Christ. In 1961, another large collection of scrolls was found in a cliff-side cave near the Dead Sea in "Israel." Mainly, they turned out to be a collection of legal documents relating to a group of refugee Judeans who had fled to the cave after Roman Emperor Hadrian's forces crushed a 3-$^1/_2$ year revolt led by Prince Bar Kochba in A.D. 135. Once again, *there is no mention of Jesus,* even though the scrolls are dated from A.D. 88 to 135.)

The people who lived in Qumran until approximately A.D. 68 were Es-

senes, or a branch of that sect. They are known to us from the writings of Josephus, Philo and Pliny the Elder. To many scholars the origins of the Essenes—"the outsiders" . . . "the silent ones" . . . "the pious ones"—is as obscure as their name. (The atmosphere of the time gave rise to numerous fanatical or extremist sects: the Morning Bathers, the Water Drinkers, the Worshipers at Sunrise, and others.) Everything seems to indicate, however, that the Essenes were an offshoot of the Pharisees; they carried Pharisean doctrines or tendencies to an extreme and they formed their own community in protest against the militant and liberalized priest-kings. (Should the most inflexible orthodox rabbi of today journey back in time to visit with the Essenes, he would be considered dangerously liberal—to use our terminology—and avoided as though he were a carrier of the plague.)

A number of the Dead Sea Scrolls reflect the sufferings of a leader of the community who was abandoned by his friends and abused by his enemies. He was known as a Teacher of Righteousness (Right Teacher or Righteous Teacher). The Teacher (rabbi) was the founder or consolidator and guiding genius of the sect. He was persecuted by the wicked priest (a priest-king?) who chastised him, drove him into exile, harassed him at his place of exile on the day of atonement and, presumably, put him to death. (The priest-kings of Judaism who were enjoying greater power than ever before would have been absolutely ruthless in dealing with the charismatic leader of a heretical and threatening sect. The Teacher would have been quickly killed, then hung up by his wrists in the manner of crucifixion, and then tossed into a common grave. There would have been no special treatment; no entombment. The priest-kings may have been primitive but they ruled with much cunning.) The people of the Teacher's religious group were the "sons of light." They were the faithful remnant of Israel, the heirs of the promises God had made to the fathers, the community of the Messianic age which they believed was about to dawn. All others inside and outside of Judaism were "sons of darkness."

The most logical contender for the role of the wicked priest of Qumran was Alexander Janneus who ruled the Qumran community along with the rest of Palestine from 103 to 76 B.C.—which seems to be an appropriate time for the beginning of the Jesus legends. It may well have taken nearly a century for the stories about the crucified Teacher of Righteousness (Joshua of Qumran?) to spread and grow and take hold in the minds of different people in different places. The story would have made a tortuous journey—both in writing and by word-of-mouth—over the lengthy period of time preceding the traditional birth of the Nazarene, assimilating the legends of other doomed Messiah-pretenders (wonders they had supposedly performed, for instance), and carrying with it all the while the fact that a priest-king of the Jews had killed Joshua of Qumran. Then, as the facts, myths and exaggerations were all gradually turned into one legend, the logical extension and corruption of the death of Joshua at the hands of a Jewish priest-king evolved into death at the hands of *all* the Jews. And thus it was that a myth may have been born. And how well this incredible myth (however it was formed) served the faith of the Christians. *How could Christianity be the "old wine" of Judaism when none other than the Jews, of all people, were*

the ones who delivered "the Holy and Righteous One," as Peter called him, up for execution!

There are many similarities between the writings and the beliefs of the Christians and the sectarians of Qumran who produced the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Like the Christians the people of Qumran found in the Old Testament predictions the unfolding of God's purpose in their own time. The dubious and far-fetched method of scriptural interpretation used by the Evangelists to convert Old Testament passages into "prophecies" was in common use among the people who wrote the scrolls. Here we have a very definite link between the followers of the Great Teacher and the Gospels.

The Christians copied the Pharisees and the Essenes of Qumran in observing Law with great exactitude, along with the ruthless attempt to impose it on others. Out of the Pharisean custom of emphasizing devotion to the religious Law for the purpose of impressing the people with superior holiness, emerged the Christian's claims to a superior holiness to create the impression of being separated from the common duties of life.

The life and thought of the members of the Qumran community centered on the Law of Moses and the words of the prophets, on the present will of God for his people and on the future he had marked out for them. The Great Teacher knew exactly what Moses meant in the multitudinous prescriptions of the Law and how they should be observed; and he taught that God had revealed to him how the predictions of the prophets would be fulfilled in the events and personages of the community's life. ("I say unto you," said the Jesus of the Gospels, "Till heaven and earth pass one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.") The people of Qumran believed, too, that in the last days a mighty warrior, a descendant of David, would arrive with sword in hand to judge all nations. ("I come not to bring peace, but the sword," said Jesus.)

The background and content of the New Testament is strikingly illuminated by the scrolls. The dualism of the scrolls, the concept of predestination, conceptions of atonement, attitudes toward the Law, and many other theological perspectives too numerous to mention offer significant comparisons and contrasts with the theology of the New Testament. The overseer at Qumran is at least partly paralleled by Peter and later by James in the Jerusalem church. The Lord's Supper, as a liturgical anticipation of the Messianic banquet, bears points of similarity to the sacred meals of Qumran.

The language and thought of the scrolls especially resemble both the terminology and theology of John and the Johannine letters—e.g.: the strong dualism of both (God and the devil, light and truth as opposed to darkness and error, the children of God and the children of the devil); the interplay between determinism and free will in both; the common emphasis on love within the brotherhood of faith; the use of the metaphor of a spring (or well) of water (at Qumran it is the Law as interpreted by the Teacher, but in John it is Jesus the Christ).

Indeed, the Dead Sea Scrolls give every reason to believe that the Essenes had an *enormous* influence on early Christianity. In particular, the Temple Scroll—so-called because it not only contains a command from God to build a temple, it also provides the design and measurements of the temple's construction—bears this out. There are indications in this scroll that nu-

merous contributors to what was to become Christianity, including both Paul and John the Baptist, visited the Essene community along the northwest shore of the Dead Sea and became quite familiar with the laws and customs of the Qumranians. The close similarities between the scrolls and the New Testament as seen in the teachings and ministry of John the Baptist, in Acts, and in the letters of Paul, support this conclusion. Paul especially resembles the Qumranians in his stress on the divine mystery, the doctrine of man, with much emphasis on the weakness, sinfulness and unworthiness of man, and the divine righteousness and grace which rescue helpless man in a radical conversion and gift of the Holy Spirit.

It cannot be denied, though, that the central point of Pauline theology—*salvation through the death and resurrection of the savior-god*—has no parallel in the thought of Qumran. Admittedly, this concept would not likely have been an issue among the Jews who were the disciples of the Teacher during his lifetime; and possibly not even to most of those who worshiped his memory after his death. It was a current belief in the Graeco-Roman world that the spirits of various distinguished men *visibly* ascended to heaven. It was not a common belief of orthodox Jews. Primarily, ascensions were acknowledged to be solar features belonging to the pagan sun-gods. Not until gentile Christianity developed and began borrowing from the sun-gods did the resurrection of Joshua or Jesus become a central part of the faith. Then, like Mithra, he was entombed; and the circulation of the story of the empty grave or tomb then became a logical part of the myth.

Some consideration must be given, on the other hand, to the Jewish legends about certain biblical patriarchs who were carried alive to heaven in the days before the Flood. Obviously, not *all* Jews were immune to the ascension superstition. It is important to remember also that we are dealing with an *extremist sect* here and not with the majority of the Jews of the time who would have been more likely to reject a crucified Messiah. It is not beyond the realm of possibility then that the founders of the Messianic cult of Joshua of Qumran (assuming that this scenario has some validity)—the Semitic cultists whom we might call the first Christians (naturally they did not call themselves Christians)—could or would have chosen a dead man, a failed Messiah, to be their deliverer or anointed one. (In Hebrew, an anointed one is *Mashiah,* a description applied to a priest or king who has been sanctified by the rubbing on of oil. In Greek, the word for the anointed one is *christos*. From the Greek christos came the word *christiani,* which the members of the cult eventually came to call themselves. The name was very similar to chresto, meaning "good, excellent, gracious." Hence the eventual identification of the Son of God as Messiah or Christos.)

Perhaps by that time the legend of Joshua of Qumran had become so much larger than life that his followers could not accept his death. Perhaps they saw Joshua as one who only *seemed* to experience a crucified death at the hands of the wicked priest-king; the divinity in him had left his body just prior to crucifixion—thus eliminating any thought of "resurrection" from the grave. Perhaps, since Joshua's body had probably been tossed into an unknown common grave and had, therefore, virtually disappeared from the face of the earth forever, they chose to believe that their Messiah had ascended bodily to heaven like Elijah and Enoch. Or perhaps the intense re-

ligious fervor they felt along with the terrible sense of frustration and grief because of the fall of Israel led them to embrace a form of Messianism they would have rejected under different circumstances. The priest-kings, with their arrogance and lack of religious fervor, had *betrayed* Israel and *lost* Israel. With the fall of Jerusalem in 63 B.C. the hated gentile Romans had taken command of Palestine. Israel was paying a terrible price for the arrogance of the wicked priest-kings who had lusted for earthly power and who had turned their backs on Yahweh. Now Yahweh had turned his back on Israel.

Possibly they felt the time had come for a new approach to faith, a new Messianic force, a new revelation, a time to *choose* a Messiah, an anointed one—and the rabbi Joshua of Qumran who had led a powerful revolt against the wicked priest-kings may have been their choice. Joshua the Messiah, the Prince of Yahweh, would be the new deliverer who would lead Israel back to the ways of Yahweh. Because Joshua or Jesus would be understood under the Semitic concept of a Messiah, he would have to be the son of an earthly father standing in the direct line of descent from David to the coming king.

In the Old Testament, the patriarch Joseph emerges as the ideal figure of a wise man. What better name could be chosen for the father of the newly anointed one? As for the mother, her name would have meant nothing to the Jews. Only the father would have been significant. As Montefiore points out, pious Jews of the time regarded as dangerous and objectionable anything to do with women—even looking at them or talking to them. It was only later when Joshua was assimilated to the sun-gods that the name of the mother became important.

When the Hellenized Jews—Paul and his followers and the students of Philo—became interested in the new movement, they soon realized that the concept of a Jewish Messiah would not do. A different god and an entirely different movement would have to be created. And thus began the movement from the totally Semitic *blind obedience* to God's will to a faith which redeemed man from his slavery to sin by an *act* of God's will. First they wrote Joseph, the earthly father of Joshua, out of the scenario; then they began to eradicate the image of the typical formalistic Jewish rabbi from the story. The next step was to begin to assimilate Joshua to the sun-gods of Asia. For the day of his death, they chose a time when a partial eclipse of the sun occurred—an actual event (April 3rd, A.D. 33), according to some modern astronomers. And soon, Mary, the mother of all the gods, became the virginal mother of Joshua.

The latter half of the 1st century was dedicated to transferring Christianity from its original home in the Semitic culture of Palestinian Judaism to the Gentile culture of the Roman Empire. By the end of the 1st century the spirit of universalism as taught by Stephen and described in Acts shows a very distinct difference between the Semitic Christians and the Hellenistic Jews who felt that the Christian community must stand forth in history as remote from the Mosaic institution as possible. Pagans as well as Jews were being evangelized by that time. It was in the capital of Syria that the new faith first appeared to be distinct from both the pagan and Jewish colonies in that city. And it was in Antioch that the name *Christian* was first used.

We know very little for *certain,* of course. About many things, we can only speculate. About *one* thing, though, we are *absolutely* certain: JESUS LIVED AND DIED IN TOTAL OBSCURITY. Not only did his most significant contemporaries (if, that is, he *did* live)—scholars, historians and philosophers—ignore him, the two most important manuscript discoveries of modern times do not confirm his existence. How is it possible that the Jesus who was so important that he was able to perform wondrous miracles including returning to life *after* he was murdered failed to impress everybody who was anybody in his day and time? There is only one answer to this question: IT ISN'T POSSIBLE! And no amount of theological mumbo-jumbo can diminish the severity of this indictment. (For rational, intelligent people who are not mesmerized by the savior-god myth, this single devastating arrow pierced the Christian heart a long time ago.)

In THE LATE GREAT BOOK: THE BIBLE, we have demonstrated with reasonable clarity how all things about the Jesus of the Gospels were made to conform to the savior-god formula: to numbers that had special significance, to so-called prophecies that had to be fulfilled, to sayings current in his day, and with words and actions that had to match exactly the words and actions of others (sun-gods, philosophers, prophets, religious teachers). Not one of the New Testament teachings and none of the biographical details can with absolute certainty be ascribed to a *real* or *historical* Jesus of Nazareth. In the face of such an obviously manufactured record, along with an objective consideration of the tenor and the temper of the times, the most likely and logical conclusion that can be drawn is that the Jesus story was a basin into which the legendary contributions of several (perhaps many) Messiah-pretenders flowed, and that one of them probably served as the basic model for the Jesus of the Gospels.

Perhaps it happened this way . . .

During the early years of the period that we now call the 1st century A.D., a small Messianic sect made up mainly of disenchanted Jews from various sects flourished in Judea. By that time, this group of extremists had already chosen a dead man, a crucified Messiah-pretender, to lead them back to the ways of Yahweh. To many Jews of the time, regardless of the religious interpretations of the factions to which they belonged (even then, Jews were pluralistic in the practice of their faith), this unusual sect was an abomination "whoring" after a false god. And so, with utter repugnance, most of the Jewish people turned away from the new Messianic cult. It was for this very reason that Philo, Josephus and other Jewish writers of that era totally ignored the group. As just another band of zealots the cult was unworthy of consideration. (Apparently the 1st century had more than its share of Jewish heretics. By A.D. 70, according to the Jerusalem Talmud, there were no less than 24 kinds of Jewish heretics in Jerusalem.) The outstanding gentile writers of the day were equally indifferent. If small groups of Jewish fanatics were ignored by the members of their own race, would a gentile scholar consider them worth mentioning? Hardly. Without exception, therefore, the major literary figures of the day ignored the worshipers of the "Jesus" whom I have taken the liberty of calling *Joshua of Qumran.*

By the time Saul of Tarsus—who was born early in this *first* century—was a young man, it must have been common knowledge to anyone who

came into contact with the sect that their Jesus, or Joshua, was a man who had somehow become a God; a man who had perhaps been sacrificed for the benefit of the members of his sect; and a man about whom it was said that he had overcome death. There, for all to see who could see, was a credible archetype for a savior-god. For Paul, the *critical moment* in history had arrived. Saul of Tarsus, who became the Hellenized Paul, recognized the potential in the religion of this unusual sect; he *seized* that moment in history and in the company of other Hellenized Jews he began the movement that transplanted the faith of those whom we now call the "early Christians" into the gentile world of Greece and Rome.

As the long-dead Qumranian rabbi was slowly assimilated to the sun-gods of Asia the pagans began to pay more than casual attention to the new faith. To put it mildly, the pagans had never been impressed with the religion of Judaism. They found the exaggerated holiness of the Jews comical . . . the complicated and incomprehensible Jewish laws absurd . . . and the endless Jewish fussing with such things as Sabbath-keeping, tithes and temple rituals, the washing of pots and pans and knives, the blood and butter taboos, and the sexual mutilation ritual known as circumcision, demented exercises in futility at best. But here was a sect made up primarily of Oriental Semites and Hellenized Jews whose members were beginning to hold their feasts on *Sun*-days! They were beginning to associate the death of their anointed one with an eclipse of the sun! Perhaps they were sun-worshipers! After all, hadn't their God performed great miracles and then actually ascended to heaven like the sun-gods of old? *Perhaps their God was great! Maybe their message was worth considering!* And so, even in the face of those pagans who mocked the new religion for stealing ideas from the mystery cults, the spirit of universalism slowly began to pervade the movement.

In Paul's final years (he was supposedly martyred in A.D. 67), he became a traveling evangelist preaching the "good news" gospel about his savior-god throughout the land, spreading the word as rapidly as he could. With such charismatic messengers as Paul, John the Baptist and their devoted disciples who carried on after their deaths, it can perhaps be appreciated why the infant faith began to take hold and spread; why by the turn of the 2nd century a distinct separation from Judaism was evident; and why a considerable body of devout Christian legend had been developed by the time of Tacitus, Suetonius and Pliny the Younger, who were then motivated to write of Christianity as if the stories about the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus were rooted in historical fact rather than in *evolutionary folklore* and *evangelical fantasy*.

It is important to note that by this time the memory of the Joshua who had paid with his life for leading a revolt against the priest-kings some two hundred years earlier no longer existed. A *new* Joshua had been created: the Joshua who had become the living God of the Christians; the Son of God who had lived and died and had then ascended to heaven when Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea. (How easy it is to forget as we look back in time how very much can happen in a mere one hundred years of human history—how startling and phenomenal the changes can be; how the whole world can seem to be turned upside down in little more than the span of one lifetime. To better understand this point, we need do no more than to

compare the America of the 1880's with the America of today.) Just as Philo and Josephus, *et al.*, had been unable to imagine or predict what would evolve over the following century out of the extremist sect they abhorred, the writers and scholars of the 2nd century were equally in the dark about what had really happened one hundred years earlier—since the major scholars of *that* time had not left a single reference either to the sect or to the Jesus that its members supposedly revered. Logically, the historians and philosophers of the 1st century were *never seriously aware* of the long-deceased and insignificant Joshua who was to become the manufactured Christ of the Christian Church.

For several more centuries the legends of this new religion were created and borrowed and molded and shaped and forged until "Christianity" had become a state-sanctioned theocracy destined to spread into a worldwide system of theological belief.

The obsessive dream of the restless and ingenious Paul was on its way to fulfillment.

Although the Christians testify that faith alone is enough to sustain them, and that historical evidence outside of the Gospels is not really necessary, they do make rather a desperate attempt to find a historical sanction for Jesus in the questionable statements of Tacitus, Suetonius and others. They try with equal desperation to discount any similarities that would link Christianity with one of the Messiah-pretenders who died at the hands of the Jewish priest-kings. The similarities found in the Dead Sea Scrolls are irrelevant, they claim, because the differences outweigh the resemblances.

But just the opposite is true.

The incisive significance lies in the similarities. The differences are relatively insignificant because they can be so easily explained.

The Christians had several hundred years to create a savior-god *as near to the image they wanted* as possible—to have their Jesus say and do *exactly what they thought he should say and do*. To as large a degree as possible they divorced him from the orthodox beliefs of the Jews; then they ignored the *man* and concentrated on creating the *Christ*. They eliminated disturbing "similarities" from the archetypal Joshua; they deliberately built acceptable "differences" into their Christ and the Christian system from the beginning; and there was a great deal of time and experimentation involved in that selective creativity.

Was Joshua too much the Pharisee? Have him condemn the scribes (though not necessarily Pharisees, the scribes were usually of that party) and the Pharisees.

Was he too much the rabbi? Have him eject money-changers and dove-sellers from the temple, and associate with women.

Was he too much the Jew? Have him betrayed for thirty pieces of silver by a Jew named *Judas*. (Judas is a short form of the word Ioudaios which means not Jew but *all* Jews.) Why for *thirty* pieces of silver? Because Zechariah speaks in the Old Testament of *his* price as being thirty pieces of silver. And thus it is that the stone of *betrayal* is cunningly used for the killing of two birds: another "miraculous" prophecy is fulfilled; and the Christian savior-god is made to appear less like the old wine of Judaism and

more like the new wine of Christianity because his own people have turned against him.

Was he born of man? Eliminate the earthly father.

Was he born of woman? Turn her into a virgin and name her after the mother of all the gods.

Was he a failed (murdered) Messiah? Turn him into a resurrected savior-god. But not just any God. Not just another Osiris or Mithra or Krishna. But the greatest savior-god of them all—the *one* divine son of the *only* God, Very God of Very God.

In truth, certain of the Gospel writers—including editors and fine-tuners—went overboard in radically liberalizing Jesus to the point that no church of the time could live with him. Consider the shocking and monstrous breach that developed between what was taught by the Jesus of the Gospels who was kind to and tolerant of women, and the furious hatred of women that permeated the entire Christian system from the most eminent Fathers of the Church to the lowliest monks. One might logically ask how the founders of Christianity, which was named after the one Lord Jesus Christ "who established, indwelt, and guided the church," his cosmic significance supposedly demonstrated by the miracle of his resurrection, could betray so completely the words and actions of the Lord of lords and King of kings, their Christ through whom they knew the supreme revelation of God.

As strange as it may seem they did just that.

To Augustine (one of the most eminent of the Christian Fathers), Origen, Tertullian, Chrysostom, Clement, Cyprian, and all the others—WOMAN WAS THE GATE OF HELL! With these words, the world of Christian women was damned for centuries to come to an inferior position, socially, politically and intellectually. Even Paul taught that women should be silent and obedient and never speak in church. A man praying with his head covered dishonored his head, said Paul, because he is the image of God. But a woman ought to cover her head, for she is only the image of man. (Man is a reflection of God's glory, you see, but woman is only a reflection of man's glory.) Soon thereafter, the hierarchy declared that menstruation was God's curse on women because of Eve's betrayal of Adam; and for most of the long Christian era that followed, menstruating women were forbidden to enter a church.

How can such dichotomous behavior be explained?

The most jarring thought that comes bubbling up from the murky depths of this story is that Jesus the Nazarene was *so very much a part of myth that he never really existed for the founders of the Church and their followers*. This attitude is clearly exemplified by Paul to whom Jesus the man was a mystical being possessing no human history, and nothing in the way of worldly biography but death and resurrection. All Paul had to say about Jesus was that he had quit the right hand of God and come to earth to serve as a supreme sacrifice for all men. Other than mentioning the crucifixion, ascension, and the redemption from sin that could be gained through certain sacraments, Paul showed no interest in any of the elaborate details which are recorded in the later gospel narratives.

Let us keep in mind, too, that the founders of Christianity believed that the "end time" was near, that they were facing the coming Doomsday. Im-

pelled by the fear that the last trumpet would sound before he had fulfilled his mission, Paul rushed around the empire preaching that the Messiah had *already* come, had suffered a sacrificial death, and had ascended unto heaven. Anyone who wished to be saved, he said, should repent and be baptized in quick order. With Doomsday and the return of the Son of God almost upon them, it can perhaps be understood why the Christians of the first four hundred years took no interest in the earthly vessel known as Jesus of Nazareth. If they had, it might have occurred to them to change the Gospels so that Jesus no longer appeared to be an absurd enigma of the times—a curiously schizoid, make-believe Messiah, who wandered around in the company of women prattling about loving one's enemies and preventing people from throwing stones at harlots.

For those who find these speculations outrageous, I hasten to point out that there are a good many of us in this world who find it outrageous that millions of people still believe in the childlike fabrications of the New Testament.

Like it or not, truth is usually more impressive than fancy. It nearly always turns out to be more spectacular than any of the explanations found in myth, legend and tradition. If it were not for the fact that myth has such enormous appeal, the legend-makers would always sink in quick order with the little credibility upon which they stand.

The past is a vast insane asylum of myth—a deep, dark chamber populated with the ghosts of the legions who have mortgaged their souls to myth.

The world into which "Joshua of Qumran" was born was filled with myth.

Augustus Caesar rose from death and ascended bodily to heaven, and the dead awakened in their graves, rivers rolled back, and cities fell to the ground at the spoken word. Augustus was worshiped as a god. The Athenians built altars and shrines to Empedocles and appointed priests to worship him. Plato agreed with Hesiod that departed heroes became angels. "I am the Lord of the world and the Law of the sea," Pius said of himself. Statues of Antinous, Hadrian's paramour, were in every market-place, temples were built in his honor, and his cult was maintained for a century. Joshua stopped the sun, Moses turned rods into serpents, Aaron turned water into blood, Balaam made an ass talk, Elijah and Enoch ascended to heaven without dying.

Everywhere demons lurked to tempt and pervert and warp the human spirit: demons of frost and hail and fire and wind, of the four seasons; and of adultery and greed, injustice, envy, hate, jealousy, lust and fear. The houses were full of them, said the wise men. They were under stones, in crevices, in dark places, and every place where human beings slept and worked. Demons could enter the human body and cause dizziness, vomiting, headaches and diarrhea; and if a person was really in the clutches of a demon, he could be caught up in a violent passion and be seized and convulsed and turned rigid—and only the Holy One could deliver him from the horrors of all the evil things that tear and afflict and maim and rend and torment and destroy.

Mithra was born in a cave at midnight. His initiates took the flesh of a lamb, the lamb of god, and baked it in round cakes of bread and ate it. Mithra had a seamless robe and a mystic rock, and he turned water into

wine. When the followers of Mithra worshiped their god, they took his place in a rock-tomb, or womb, and on the third day—just as their god died and rose on the third day—so did the initiate, as a god-man, man-god, born again. With the sign of the cross he was marked, and he was given secret words which would unlock the gates of the seven heavens.

In Avaroth, the seventh and highest heaven of the Jews, the abode of righteousness and blessings and all the divine treasures, the souls of the departed would be given bodies; and the angels would be there ministering to the Throne; and standing above the seventh heaven itself would be the Throne of God, with God sitting on his Throne. (Man was made in the image of God and woman in the image of man, say the holy writings of the Jews; and between them, there are as many levels as between the first and seventh heavens.) The angels of the Throne who stand before God are Michael and Gabriel and Oriel and Raphael. Kokabel is the star of the Eternal. Sahariel controls the courses of the moon. It was Gadreel who betrayed Eve. Angels were everywhere before the wicked Queyon aroused the heavenly hosts to rebellion. They came to earth commonly to marry, or to instruct and guide and foretell the future. All the great prophets talked to angels.

Among the Judeans, it was believed that the Messiah would soon come. Some believed that the year five thousand would usher in the millennium. Other learned Jews had spent their entire lives trying to calculate down to the day and the very hour when the Coming One would arrive. The Messiah would be a powerful king who would rule the whole earth. Shammai, the famous formalistic rabbi, said the Messiah would destroy all of Israel's enemies. Hillel, less rigorous in his beliefs, said that he would be a prince of peace. Everywhere there were pretended Messiahs. Augustus Caesar was said to be a Messiah. Cyrus, Alexander, Socrates, Plato and Simon the Maccabee, were said to be Messiahs. Even Herod was said to be a Messiah.

The book of Daniel seems to give six different times for the coming. Other books gave different times, and the wisest of men said only that he would come, not when. Maybe he would come on clouds of heaven, or with prayer and forgiveness, or maybe he would enter the holy city riding on an ass.

But for the apocalyptic prophets and the more rigorous rabbis the Coming One would come as an avenger with lightning and thunder, a flaming sword in his hand, his nostrils spouting fire. Everywhere there would be signs foreshadowing the triumphant entry into the kingdom, with stars pitching out of their courses, the sun and moon turning to blood; there would be darkness at noon and the most utter darkness at night, along with great whirlwinds marching upon the spheres and the earth shaking like a woman in childbirth, as the son of David revealed his presence in Israel and wiped Rome the terrible Harlot, the new Babylon, off the face of the earth, along with the enemies of God: the iniquitous, the wicked, the miscreated and misbegotten, the diabolic and hellish and infernal.

And all would be terror. The rocks would drip blood and form torrents which would inundate the plain. God would judge the people by war, by the sword and by the deluge. From heaven would fall stones, a terrible hail and brimstone. Everywhere the moans and clamor of the dying would rise in all the earth and the earth would drink the blood of men and wild beasts

would gorge themselves with their flesh. All of the heathen would be destroyed and Israel would be enthroned above all the nations of the earth. A vast celestial Jerusalem would descend from the heavens and there would be streets of gold and walls encrusted with jewels. And the son of David would rule over the earth for a thousand years.

And among the inhabitants of that vast and terrifying world inundated with mythology, it was common knowledge that the man who symbolized a god always had to be killed. (Men create gods, said Antisthenes, and then destroy them.)

> *The god-pretender will be despised and rejected. For the sins of the people he will be stricken. He will bear their grief and carry their sorrow. He will be wounded, and those who see him will find no beauty in him. He will be dressed in purple. A mock crown of thorns will be put on his head and a mock scepter in his hands. He will be scourged and crucified. Above his head they will put a derisive sign.*

AND HE WILL LIVE AFTER DEATH . . . IN MYTH.

If there is a *single* message that emerges with uncompromising clarity out of "the greatest story ever told" . . . *one* fact that can be called miraculous in the sense that we consider something remarkable . . . *one* conclusion that can stand impervious against the assaults of history—it is this:

JESUS IS ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE.

He is Gentile and Jew . . . He is God and man . . . He is perfect and imperfect . . . He is a truth and a hoax . . . He is the Son of man and the Son of God . . . He comes with peace and with the sword . . . He is obsessively formalistic and radically tolerant . . . He has human failings and a noble character . . . He curses the fig tree and loves his enemies . . . He is a brilliant scholar and a simple carpenter . . . He is a realist and a mystic . . . He is a rebellious anarchist and a despairing visionary . . . He is pro-Jewish and anti-Jewish . . . He is pro-Law and anti-Law . . . He is apocalyptic and hopeful . . . He teaches a negative penitential discipline and a positive hope for divine intervention . . . He is called rabbi, master, prophet, teacher, Messiah, servant, Son of man, savior, mediator, high priest, judge, Son of God, Word, and King of kings and Lord of lords. He is everybody and nobody.

And to those who lived closest to his memory during the first four centuries, Jesus was a very young, prematurely old, stout, slender, dark person with a light complexion, and the ugly, handsome, racial features of every people in Christendom. (Will the real Jesus please stand up?)

Who is he really?

Guess if you can; choose if you dare.

And so, at the conclusion of this examination we must ask . . . What

has history left us? . . . and in all honesty, must answer . . . NOTHING BUT THE MYTH . . . which can be traced with some degree of certainty from the time of Paul.

In his remarkable novel *Jesus Came Again,* Vardis Fisher suggests that for the thoughtful, "the myth must always be of far greater importance than the facts."

Perhaps.

But the world would probably be a measurably better place if facts were always of far greater importance than myth.

On the other hand, the universality and potent psychological appeal of myth cannot be denied. With remarkable insight, O. Muller describes the psychoanalytic premise underlying the saturation of a culture with myth:

"If one who invents the myth is only obeying the impulse which also acts upon the minds of his hearers, he is but the mouth through which all speak."

Worth pondering, too, in the final analysis, are the words of Kirsopp Lake, Professor of Ecclesiastical History, Harvard:

> The thoughts and words of Jesus were borrowed from his own time and race. No historical reconstruction can make them adequate for our generation, or even intelligible except for those who have passed through an education in history impossible for most.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Judaism

And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.

(II Samuel 24:1.)

And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.

(I Chronicles 21:1.)

"An atmosphere of haughtiness and boastfulness has come upon us; we don't care about the world; we will show them who is the master . . . We will confiscate Arab lands; we will enclose areas and establish 'exceptions,' we will settle everywhere without giving the right of self-determination to the Israeli Arabs; we will brawl with Muslims all over the world—for free, in vain—about praying hours at a place that has been for generations a Muslim mosque (the Mosque of Abraham in Hebron).

"We do all this and no one can stop us, yet the sedimentation of grudges against us is growing. Our internal affairs are not secret; they are published through all the media; people in London, Paris and New York open the newspaper and read incomprehensible things about Israel.

"They read about the burning down of the (religious) mission and the governmental threat to expel Christians; about a ministerial committee meeting in order to decide how to fight the 'Jews for Jesus,' about decisions of the government to disengage itself from its promises about Biram and Ikrit because of the 'precedent.' They read and are astonished about the 'mamzerim' (bastard) issues, they read about confusion over 'who is a Jew' and similar matters, things they associate with under-developed societies.

"They know that the Writers' Union—supposedly intellectuals—refuses to accept Arab writers because of their origins; they hear that the Prime Minister speaks all day long against 'mixed weddings'; that the Israeli law defines the citizenship rights according to the test of the grandfather and grandmother, and that the Chief Rabbi declares that the rules of justice and equality do not apply to Gentiles. They read and start asking themselves what is happening to it, to the State of Israel.

"Whoever thinks that the world understands only the language of strength, that one way or another it is always against us, shouldn't come with complaints about the 'world' . . . Only a paranoiac thinks that the world is

plotting against him. Only a megalomaniac thinks that we could answer with war to such a plot. The Israeli who loves his country will fight—here, inside—in order to put out the wicked fire that has taken hold of part of us, the government and the Knesset . . . We have behaved sometimes with disregard for others; we have blown the horn more than was necessary; we have driven through the lawns; we have trodden some flowerpots."

This remarkable statement was made by an Israeli named Amnon Rubenstein, a severe critic of the undemocratic posture of the State of Israel.

With all due respect to the courageous author of these remarks, few living Americans have ever heard an objective critical word about either Israel or the political movement known as Zionism. Even fewer Americans know anything substantial about Jews—where they came from originally, who they are, and what their religion is all about. (Who is Sammy Glick? And what makes him tick?)

As far as the West is concerned, it all began around two thousand years ago at the eastern end of the Mediterranean where a land bridge about the size of New Jersey connects southern Europe and Asia with northern Africa, when the struggle between the prophets and the Kings of Judaism culminated in the development of the Christian-Judaic system.

For nearly two millennia the area has been known as Palestine. Since this was the land of the biblical Philistines, or people of the sea, who occupied the southern coastal area in the 12th century B.C., the name Palestine was derived from "Philistia." As long ago as 50,000 years, according to anthropologists, the area was occupied by peoples of mixed racial stock. About 4000 years ago the Canaanites became predominant in the country. As for the fabled city of Jerusalem it can scarcely be called a product of the Hebrew-Israelite-Judean community that has developed over the past 3000 years. Egyptian texts of the 19th century B.C. listed the name of the city as "Urushalimma" (meaning "foundation of Shalem"), and that was more than 800 years before King David occupied the city. Shalem was that same Semitic god whose name appears in "Shalmaneser," the Assyrian king.

As history would have it, the remote land of Palestine was never destined to be just another insignificant spot on the map. This tiny patch of desert became a crossroads, a meeting-place, and a battleground of cultures, religions and nations. For at least 3000 years the land has been subjected to invasions, conquests and foreign rule by such diverse peoples as Babylonians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, European crusaders, Turks and Britons. (Small wonder that the area is still a pustulating rash of contention on the epidermis of the earth.)

Speaking generally, the peoples of what we will refer to here as the *biblical world* can be classified as Hamites, Semites, and Indo-Europeans. (There are others, but for the purposes of this inquiry these are the most significant.)

1) Hamites: The legendary descendants of Ham, one of the three sons of Noah. They include the Egyptians, Ethiopians (Cushites), and Libyans.

2) Semites: The legendary descendants of another son of Noah, Shem. They include the Assyrians and Babylonians (Akkadians), the Canaanites and Phoenicians, Amorites, Arameans, Hebrews, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and the Arab groups.

3) Indo-Europeans: Among this classification are many peoples, including

the Greeks, Romans, Lydians, Cimmerians (Gomer), and also the Medes, Persians, Philistines, and Scythians, who are Indo-Iraneans.

The Sumerians, of whom no hint is given anywhere in the Old Testament, were also important in the biblical world. They inhabited the Sumer, the lower Tigris-Euphrates alluvial valley. Indirectly they influenced a great deal of the ancient Near East. Linguistically and ethnically they were a people separate from all the rest. Their language resembles no known speech.

But the people we are most concerned with are the Hebrews and their history. How much of the history available to us is made up of fables that have been agreed upon, is hard to say. We can only attempt to resuscitate an alien background in the face of the prejudices of the present and the myths of the past.

Some scholars call them *Habiru* and say the word means the people from beyond the river. Others say the word *Hebrew* comes from the word *Ibhri*, meaning "one who crosses over." A connection to both of these definitions is apparent in the story of Abraham who first crossed over the Jordan from his home in Ur of the Chaldees into the Holy Land. But the name "Hebrew" was never used by the Israelites to describe themselves, and so it was never a proper name for Israel. These people—for the time being we will call them Hebrews—came out of the most barren of deserts, which were to them the "wilderness."

A fable tells us there were twelve tribes; but no one knows how many tribes there were. Some scholars think no more than eight for the reason that not only the names of some of their tribes, but some of their deities, appear elsewhere. A well-known Semitic deity was named Gad; and the name of another deity, Ashur, may have been modified to Asher.

The language of Israel seems to have become a mixture of Akkadian, proto-Aramean (Amorite), Canaanite, and a number of Egyptian loan-words. The vocabulary was smaller than other Semitic languages. There were two genders and very few adverbs. It was deficient in abstract terms, so symbol and metaphor were used to express abstractions: soul was the breath, being was the bones, descendants the seed, vigor the horn, compassion the bowels, and so on. Bethlehem meant the house of bread. King of kings, song of songs, holy of holies, etc., was their way of expressing the superlative degree. Eating dust, a common expression, was a refinement of eating dung. Rock, which also appears in the New Testament, was a common word for deity. Hallelujah meant literally "praise Yah," the name of their Kenite god.

When first we learn of the Habiru, they were living in southern Mesopotamia in the time of Rim-Sin, a king of Larsa who was overthrown by Hammurabi (1910 B.C.). They were Aramean (Syrian) nomads who, according to some sources, came in from the desert to enroll as mercenaries with the Sumerians. What is referred to now as the family of Abraham was more likely a composite of several generations of a family. Possibly they lived in Ur when Hammurabi conquered the city, and that development prompted the Hebrews to migrate into northern Syria. In turn, this might have led to the eventual migration of some of the tribes in the 15th and 14th centuries into the land that came to be known as Palestine.

When the Hebrews emerged from the wilderness, they did not bring with them the ten commandments that we know. Little or nothing of the so-called

Mosaic legislation can be attributed to Moses. What "commandments" they had would have been nothing at all like the slick, dramatically styled, "do" and "do not" observances of the Christians. Indeed, they would not have been moral in content at all; they would have been instead simple taboos typical of those held by any primitive people, such as the one dealing with the sacrifice of the firstborn to the gods.

No one can say for sure that Moses was a historic person. Some scholars accept the story of the historical Moses, while others deny it completely; but there just isn't any real proof. The tales that have been attributed to him have been so embroidered, it is quite impossible to determine what he ever did or taught, if indeed he lived. There are too many similarities, as well, to mythical elements common to numerous other peoples. In building his image, in other words, his biographers drew upon many sources. The adding of the *Yam-Suph* ("Reed Sea" or "Sea of Weeds") to the story of the exodus in order to show that Moses could summon up a great miracle from the Semitic god is an obvious embellishment to contribute to his image.

While the religion of the Hebrews was not "belched forth" *in toto* from the bowels of the people who so devoutly profess the faith, it was a product of the Semitic world and entirely suited to the Hebrews—a people fanatically "holy to the Lord." The Hebrew-Israelite-Judeans were Orientals; their culture and religion were saturated with the atmosphere, attitudes, loneliness, cruelty and moral values of desert-dwellers; and their religion drew many of its constituent elements from the stock of ideas and beliefs common to the Semitic peoples of the Orient. The story of the creation in Genesis, for instance, had as its source the Babylonian story of creation. The so-called Law of Moses closely parallels the Code of Hammurabi. From another people they got their concept of monotheism; then they proceeded to create an intensely personal, wifeless, womanless, childless, Father-God, before which no goddess (Mother image) could ever prevail . . . a God who served only the tribe, never the individual . . . a religion in which an entrenched Orthodox minority could exercise an exclusive authority over all areas of life and religious practice for the entire people.

The Hebraic religion, then, was never totally isolated from its neighbors or its captors. Even though many of the moral and ethical ideas in the Jewish system have analogies in the faiths of Egyptians, Babylonians, and others, it still developed as a religion peculiarly suited to the bare and terrible desert which gave it birth—a religion for a people who would, of necessity, turn toward the Father rather than the Mother, and whose lives would be a total immolation at the shrine of the terrifying Yahweh. (The people of the West must eventually adjust their minds to the fact that the moral heritage of modern civilized society did not originate with the primitive Hebrew settlement in Palestine.)

The next historical word about the migrant Hebrews comes from the Nile, but it has nothing to do with the biblical narratives about the sojourn of Joseph and the exodus from Egypt under Moses. No one knows when the descendants of the Abrahamic tribes entered Egypt, or why. Speculation has it that they may have come as mercenaries with the hated Hyksos who brought so much damage and misery to Egypt. Other Hebrews may have migrated to Egypt 3700 years ago (during the rule of the Shepherd Kings). It was a

time when the Nile valley attracted many foreigners, including Semitic dancing girls and concubines, who were highly esteemed.

There is a clear-cut reference to the Hebrews in the Tell el-Amarna letters during the reign of Akhnaten, only this time they are called the *Habiri*, a name meaning "cut-throats" or "brigands" to the Egyptians. Perhaps the Habiri, as predatory nomads and mercenaries, did more fighting against the Egyptians than with them. A hundred years later the Egyptians waged warfare several times in Palestine to drive out the Hittites. Some Hebrews may have come with them on these sorties; others may have been taken back as slaves. By about 1220 B.C. the "Israel stele" (a slab, or pillar of stone, bearing a notice) was appropriated by King Merneptah from the temple of Amenhotep III at Thebes. This is the first known monument in which the word Israel is used, and it suggests that certain Hebrew tribes having the name Isra-el (ruled by God) were established in Canaan and Palestine as early as the reign of Rameses II (1292–1225 B.C.). These people were members of the Leah tribes who called their deity Yahweh. The Rachel tribes who lived in Egypt knew their deity as Elohim. It was during the exodus from Egypt, according to legendary accounts, that they came to acknowledge Yahweh.

Around this time the Philistines, who were of Hellenic descent, came from Crete and settled on the plain along the southern Palestinian coast where they founded five great cities from Joppa to Gaza. They introduced the manufacture of iron into that part of the world and in other ways developed a highly advanced culture. They allied themselves and ultimately merged with the Canaanites who had been in Palestine much longer than either the Israelites or the Philistines. In subsequent centuries the Canaanites moved to the northern coast and became known as the Phoenicians. The Philistine-Canaanites who remained were the ancestors of today's Palestinians.

When the Hebrews invaded Canaan they adopted certain agricultural festivals, including the Unleavened Bread, Wheat Harvest, and Ingathering. Did they bring the sabbath with them? Not likely, since the sabbath implies the settled life of agriculture. They may have inherited that from the Babylonians. Perhaps it had its origin in a lunar festival. In making it a rest day, however, the Hebrews gave it a historical origin.

There is no doubt that they brought the rite of sacrifice with them. To devote or to set apart something special for the deity was the meaning of the sacrifice. To partake of the produce of the soil without due payment would be a crime against the Holy One. The earth and all things in it belonged to god, therefore the firstfruits, including the firstborn sons, belonged to god through sacrifice. Indeed, the consecrated offering represented the god himself—the "imperishable sacrifice." In the words of the god Siva, "It is I that am the actual offering; it is I that you butcher upon my altars." The sacrifice became the god, the god himself was eaten, and the virtues of the god were absorbed. Eventually the rite was refined to the point that surrogates were offered or, finally, a payment in money to redeem the firstborn. (The Jesus story is a refinement of the more ancient immolation of the god.) Warfare to the Hebrews was essentially a religious duty with every war a "holy" war. To utterly destroy all people on the opposing side was an act of service to the Jewish god; and the warriors marched off to battle

with imprecations against their enemies by priests and magicians singing in their ears. After victory all prisoners were to be killed. Should one care to participate in the sacramental eating of holy flesh after battle one should fast before fighting.

During a period of about 100 years preceding 1000 B.C., the Habiru (or Habiri) tribes under the leadership of Saul and David gained dominion over Palestine and formed the monarchy of Israel. This period became known as the United Kingdom. From about 937 B.C. under Solomon (assuming for a moment that there was such a person), the monarchy became weakened and divided on his death into two kingdoms, one in the north consisting of ten tribes located in Samaria and still known as Israel, and a second in the south consisting of two tribes centered about Jerusalem and known as Judah. For a little over 200 years these two kingdoms were in conflict with everybody from Amalekites to Philistines. Finally, Samaria was sacked by the Assyrians and 27,000 Israelites were carried away as prisoners. The legend of the lost Ten Tribes was all that remained of them.

Shortly after 600 B.C., the remaining Habiru kingdom made the mistake of aiding that intransigent enemy of the Babylonians, the Egyptians. (A careful reading of the history of the Israelites reveals that they often had difficulty in making the right friends.) So in a very short time, the Babylonians invaded Jerusalem, not once but twice, totally destroying the city and removing most of the inhabitants—in a style to which they were becoming accustomed—to a foreign land: this time, Babylon. This captivity, or Exile, lasted until 538 B.C. when the Persians under Cyrus conquered Babylon. Most of the Jewish captives then returned to Jerusalem as Persian subjects and in 520 B.C. began to build the Temple at Jerusalem. By 516, after numerous exhortations by Haggai and his confreres, the Temple was completed and the Empire reorganized.

How many of the people of Israel went into captivity and how many returned is unknown. Jeremiah cites a figure of 4600, and this is probably much closer to the truth than the 18,000 people including "men of valour," "men of might," and "craftsmen and smiths" recorded in II Kings. In any case those who returned are made to appear as the founders of the new Israel, just as the exiles entering Canaan from Egypt had been made to appear as the founders of the old empire. And so the new Israelites rebuilt the city; they prepared a golden crown for the king (the Coming One) that they expected Yahweh to send; and while they waited they engaged in the usual political jealousies and recurrent conflicts with the Edomites, Philistines and Samaritans.

There was a time long ago when the Hebrews worshiped more than one god and their religion was free of any preoccupation with guilt and shame. The only sexual injunction in their commandments was against adultery. There was no ban on pre-marital sex. Prostitution was frowned upon but common. Sodomy (anal intercourse) was not considered a crime in preexile times except when committed as part of the religious worship of non-Semitic gods.

From about 500 B.C., however, changes began to develop in what we now refer to as Judaism. Following the Captivity, references are made to the establishment of a new relationship with God after death, and among

the more extremist of Jews, even to a resurrection. Also developing at that time was a strong increase in patriarchal morality. Along with the condemnation of all pleasure, especially sexual pleasure, women were condemned for corrupting mankind. The death penalty could be directed against a woman who touched a man's genitals. Virginity began to be praised. Homosexuality was made a capital crime. Nudity was thought obscene and shameful among members of the same sex.

More and more the concept of pollution dominated the thinking of the Jews. More and more they came to feel that not only could they become polluted by their own actions, their evil deeds could also create punishments which would be visited on their children. More and more they became obsessed with the sense of guilt and the painful sensation of shame caused thereby. And more and more they abased themselves before the Jewish god, making Yahweh the most rigorous of all superego images, a super-Father who demanded total obedience—the strictest, most castrating of all Father-Gods. Understanding the harsh and terrible conditions in which they lived makes it easier to see why the Jews had to surrender so completely to the will of the Father. The Moroccan and Egyptian deserts and the area of the Dead Sea are so barren and inhospitable, they came to believe that their dependence on the Father had to be absolute if they were to survive.

Paralleling that development was an always increasing obsession with ritual and ceremony. No ancient religion has ever observed the value of ceremonialism to such a degree of living reality as that approached by Judaism. (Only when a man died was he free from ceremonial laws.) Everything pointed to the fixing of men's minds on ceremonial details which were often put into the same category as moral duties. But more than that, religion was *fear* and ritual. Yahweh was to be apprehensively served by ceremony and offering and there was no room for social or private morality in that terrorized obeisance. Rather than a body of beliefs to be accepted, religion was a body of ceremonies to be performed. Ritual offenses were regarded as more grievous than moral ones.

To the orthodox Jew the study of the Torah day and night was everything. The Torah was without parallel in the world, he believed; its truth was unique; its ethics could not be equaled anywhere else. How then could a man serve a worthy purpose in life doing otherwise? Since study was the highest form of worship and worship was an expression of love, biblical study was for the Jew his hobby, pastime, sport, theatre, profession and trade. After all, the Jewish God himself faithfully and joyfully studied the Torah. There were even those who said that each passage of the Law had seventy (sic!) distinct meanings, and that Yahweh dedicated no less than three hours every day to their study. Could a loyal religious Jew do any less?

Everywhere the Law ruled, and there were laws to cover everything. What if a dead body was found midway between two cities? What should be done? Take it to the city which was nearest to it. But what if it was exactly halfway between the two cities? From what portion of the body should the measurement be taken? Some said the navel, for that was the middle of the body. Other said the face, for that was the image of God. In the Twelve Tables, vines were designated as trees. If a beast injured your vines and you brought suit against the owner of the beast you would lose if you called them vines.

A bull was not a bull but the leader of the herd. A goat was not a goat but the browser upon leeks. Long prayers were necessary to resolve every dispute. Why? Moses prayed for forty days and nights without pause.

The twelfth chapter of the book of Exodus calls for the slaughter of a lamb between two evenings. When should the death take place? At dusk? But when did the *first* evening begin? When the sun passed the meridian? Or did the first evening begin with the sunset and the *second* evening with the twilight of the same day when the first stars appeared? And what of the age of the lamb? Should it be a yearling? . . . or six months old? . . . or older than a year? And what of the matzos, or unleavened bread? Some said that it should never be baked thicker than the breadth of four fingers; and always it should be baked by three women, one to knead the dough, one to roll it, and one to bake it. But no, said others, it could be as thick as *all* the fingers on one hand, but it should never be made of barley flour. But what of the poor who could not afford wheat? Were they not allowed to use barley? And what *kind* of fingers should be used for measuring? Four ordinary fingers, most scholars agreed, but not four fingers on a fat hand, or on a thin hand, or on a child's hand, and not counting the thumb, of course, but only fingers, including the little one. And what of the water to be used for baking? It must be drawn beforehand and kept overnight. When the sun goes under the earth, you see, it heats the water, and warm water must never be used in baking the matzos, because it might cause the dough to ferment, and it would no longer be unleavened bread.

Within the ceremonial world of Judaism, the Law was inviolate; the commands of the law could never be disobeyed; or else the Holy One would *make plagues wonderful for the transgressors,* and bring upon them all the diseases of Egypt, *every sickness and every plague;* and *the Holy One would rejoice* over the destruction of the sinners, and he would *scatter them among all peoples,* and among those nations *they would have no peace*. Indeed, it was better for a man to cut off his hands and pluck out his eyes than to commit a sin no larger than a grain of mustard seed.

It was less sinful to enter a synagogue with unwashed hands than to omit a fixed prayer. It was better to beat a slave to death than to walk more than two thousand cubits on the Sabbath. It was less evil to leave an unclean Jew by the wayside to die than to touch a holy book with unclean hands. It was a smaller sin to stone to death an ignorant man who unwittingly wandered into the temple courts than to eat cheese made in a heathen dairy. A ritually clean Jew would sooner curse his own father than to sit down and eat with an unclean Jew. In the synagogues the pious men of Israel talked endlessly about vengeance but never about mercy . . . about the splendors and treasures of the temple but never about the starving poor . . . about the wickedness of the unclean but never about their own arrogance . . . about how holy the Chosen were and about how unholy the heathen were . . . about the righteousness of those who observed the Law but never about how they grew fat on the toil of the common people who came forth with their tithes and firstfruits and all of the other taxes that were demanded of them.

The bottom-line inference here is that for the weak, the sinful, the fallen and the common, the Law had little to offer. Only the ritual-intensive Jewish aristocrats had holiness.

As for the *am ha-arez*, or the poor—the simple, naive people of the soil—they were beneath the attention of a priesthood more concerned with the temple than with service to the people. The am ha-arez were especially despised because they did not say the Shema morning and night, nor did they wear the phylacteries, nor did they wear fringes on their garments. "A Jew must not marry a daughter of an am ha-arez because they are unclean animals and their women forbidden reptiles," preached the Talmud. Even the common people who were above the level of working with their hands in the soil were beneath the Jewish scholar's contempt. "What God hath cleansed," crowed the intellectual Jew, "that call not thou *common*!" Among the most snobbish of all were the intellectuals who attended the Jewish Academy in Jamnia. To talk to a woman, to look at a woman, indeed, to have anything to do with a woman, they regarded as dangerous and objectionable. To eat the bread of a Samaritan was a worse sin than eating the disgusting flesh of pigs. Only man's moral nature was important, and this could be improved only by the study of the Torah—a study restricted solely to men. As for all non-Jews, they were wild beasts or heathen.

The bitter contempt for Gentiles that permeated the pores of Judaism seems to be related to the Jewish sense of separation. Why did the Jews insist on separateness? What prompted them to demand a place apart from all the world and claim to be a chosen and elect people . . . to live with contempt for their neighbors, sitting with their imaginary crowns upon their heads, scheming all the while to elevate themselves regardless of the expense to those around them? Could this attitude have been motivated by the sense of sin and shame? Did the Jews lose themselves so completely in a colossal act of *submission* and *projection* as they impoverished themselves before an idealized image of the Father that they sank more and more into a sense of sin and shame and *denial* of *self*? Did they project so much of the best of themselves onto the patriarch they idolized that they felt empty and sinful and compelled to fill that emptyness with the sense of separation that made them feel special and unique in a world of goyim?

Should this hypothesis be correct, the Jewish psychology may very well be rooted in lack of ego-identification. Although he has no well-established country, land or national home to provide him with a foundation in the obvious, the Jew is taught from the cradle that he is both unique and elite, and destined by Yahweh to be the most important person on earth, if not the actual ruler of the planet. But then he comes face to face with the real world in which the only signs of Jewish national greatness are found in the exaggerated fables of the Old Testament. In response, he over-compensates in everything he does in his struggle for identification and recognition as a Jew. And thus it is that Jewish historians like Artapanus, Philo and many others try so desperately to prove that all the knowledge and institutions of the Egyptians had been taken from Israel; that Abraham had instructed the Pharaohs; that Joseph taught them better forms of cultivation; that all the grand discoveries of Greece had been made by Hebrews a thousand years before; that Moses with his ten commandments marked out the entire history of the Western world; and that the tiny fraction of humanity known as Jewry gave the world the concept of monotheism, the eradication of idol worship, and the abhorrence of human sacrifice.

Even in modern America we are frequently reminded that the great ethical teachings of the West came from Judaism, and that non-Jews of the Western world have survived as well as they have primarily because of the efforts of the Jews. Typical of Christian Establishmentarians who preach this absurd message are Rev. Jerry Falwell, leader of the Moral Majority movement ("God has blessed America because America has blessed the Jews—His chosen people . . ."), and Hal Lindsey, author of *The Late Great Planet Earth* ("The influence of Judeo-Christian morality originally made this country great . . ."). (Should a contest ever be staged for the purpose of determining the world's most consistent racial traitors, the hands-down winners will undoubtedly be dedicated Christians.)

Completely forgotten—or deliberately overlooked—as this ecstatic fantasy unfolds, is the fact that the West has provided the Jews with the most secure support and protection they have ever had in the world, along with a measure of individual freedom that can be found nowhere outside of the humane, libertarian, and productive societies that finally developed in the West after hundreds of years of Christian-Judaic totalitarianism. (Speaking for that totalitarian establishment, Pope Pius XII had this to say as late as 1951: "Individual liberty in reality is only a deadly anarchy.") To the advantage of libertarianism must be added the remarkable languages, the great universities, and the technological and scientific developments of the West, all of which have been used abundantly by Jews on their way to fame and fortune. (One Jewish recipient of a Pulitizer prize candidly admitted that she started lobbying for the award five years before she received it.)

Speaking from the standpoint of fact rather than fantasy, Western brilliance and creative energy has never depended upon the existence of the Jews. On the contrary, the Jews are totally indebted to the West for their present status in the world—a fact well-realized by some Jews, but not publicly admitted. Judaism would be virtually nothing in the West today (nothing more, that is, than just another obscure oriental sect), were it not for the fact that it is parasitically attached to the White gentile world because of its relationship to Christianity. Regardless of any anti-Jewish persecutions in Christian countries (invariably brought on by the anti-gentile attitudes and actions on the part of Jews, themselves), millions of Christians have, for hundreds of years, been brought up on Old Testament history, clutching the Jewish Bible to their breasts, worshiping the Jewish God through a Jewish son of God, Jesus Christ, and more often than not, lending their organized support to the aims and aspirations of the "people of the Book" (*am hasefer*).

The spectacle, therefore, of American Jews (as well as other minority members in this society) blatantly bragging about their great contributions to this nation, while carefully ignoring the savage excesses of their own people, is little short of obscene. This exercise in egotripping is motivated by two of the most common psychological aberrations: envy and emotional insecurity. The minority road in the creative, dynamic nations of the West has always been paved with inferiority complexes.

Regardless of where the truth underlying Jewish separateness may lie, one thing seems clear: The aloof and clannish Israelites had as much difficulty living with each other as with anyone outside of Jewry. As a result, restless and hapless little Palestine was almost never at peace. When the

Jews were not fighting among themselves they were nearly always in a perpetual state of war with their neighbors or with the foreign occupiers of the empire: the Greeks in the 4th century, the Syrians in the second and the Romans in the first. Against all foreigners the object of the pious Jew was to keep alive the faith in Israel. Perhaps the whole earth was not yet the footstool of the nation of Israel, but Palestine was, and would remain so in the face of all challengers. No pleas for cooperation, no threats of any kind, could change the Jewish mind or dull the spirit of nationalism that demanded for the tribe the freedom to be totally submissive to Yahweh, the freedom to be the exclusively Chosen of the earth, the freedom to be contemptuous of all other nations. For these very reasons the Jews were invariably the instigators of the conflicts. ("As for the first temple of Jerusalem, why was it destroyed?" asked Rabbi Johanan ben Toreta; and he was quite prepared to answer his own question: "On account of idolatry, incest and bloodshed prevailing there . . . why then were they exiled? Because they loved mammon and hated one another.")

With Alexander and the Greeks in the 4th century had come new ideas, but the fanatical prophets fought even harder against the hellenized Jewish kings and the fundamental Judaic faith remained untouched. Antiochus plundered the Temple in Jerusalem in 170 B.C. and forbade the Jews to observe the Sabbath, to practice the rite of circumcision and to worship Yahweh in any manner. The Jews fought back with a fury that defeated four successive Syrian armies.

The conflict between the prophets and kings deserves a few more words of explanation.

In the Old Testament, the primary emphasis is on God's creation of a special people to serve him, to proclaim his name and identity in the world, and to exhibit knowledge of him. In the struggle to make the Jews into a people of an exclusive religion and a chosen and exclusive people with a single God belonging solely to Israel, the prophets were arrayed against the kings. The prophets fought to keep the rigid way of the desert traditions. The priest-kings sought to liberalize the ways of the Jews. The struggle between the prophets and kings lasted for several centuries and left an indelible mark on the institutions, customs and religions of the Western world. Tragically, the prophets were triumphant and Christianity is rooted in the ways of the prophets rather than the ideals of the kings.

Within the Jewish scheme of things—as designed by the prophets—the male ruled with total pre-eminence while the daughter was relegated to practically the lowest level of human consciousness. The Son-symbol had climbed a long road stretching back to the dawn of human history to reach his total mastery in the male-symbol or Father-God of the primitive Israelites. In both Judaism and its offspring Christianity, the Son has been glorified in every conceivable way, whereas the daughter has remained un-ennobled and unsung. More than anything the patriarchy of the Jews has shaped the Western world. In many ways the evils that punctuate the depressing history of the Christian system can be traced to the attempt to organize and institutionalize something which by its very nature was *alien* to the vast majority of the people who were expected to adopt it. (But more on this in the following chapter, "The Rape of the West.")

Meanwhile, back at the Palestinian ranch . . . Pompey, pushing the frontiers of Rome eastward, captured the country in 63 B.C. It was on the Sabbath that he swept into Jerusalem because he knew that most Jews would not fight on that sacred day unless attacked. With the help of other Jews he slaughtered 12,000 who remained to worship in the Temple.

As the pressure of the Graeco-Roman life increased, Judaism grew sterner and more exclusive—more and more a rigid, racist religion—as the scribes increased the number of cases in which any intercourse with a Gentile would defile a Jew. While the Romans ruled, the Jews dreamed of the kingdom of Yahweh to come when the world would be destroyed by the anointed one—a Messiah, a David-king—who would pass judgement on Israel's enemies, especially the hated Romans. As the prophets and priests exhorted the people to a greater adherence to the Law and a greater hatred for the Gentiles, rebellion was constantly in the air. As a consequence, Palestine was a never-ending source of agitation for the Roman Empire.

It is significant that the Romans were not always ruthlessly inflexible in their demands. Believe as you choose, they said, but just say Caesar is lord, and burn incense to him on an altar, nothing more. Millions of people of all faiths swore this same allegiance to the Roman Caesar. Only Jews and Christians refused. Nonetheless, Trajan yielded to Jewish entreaties and gave them permission to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. Another time, a special exemption was provided for the Jews when coins were minted with a simple and inoffensive superscription, without the emperor's head. Even Titus, poised with a great army at the gates of Jerusalem, tried to reason with them; but to no avail. Because of the conflicts within Jewry itself, Palestine had always to be garrisoned by Roman soldiers to keep the Sadducees, Pharisees and Zealots from cutting each other's throats over endless interpretations of the Law. (The Jewish ritual had to be inflexibly maintained, but the doctrine could be endlessly modified.)

As recounted earlier, there were for the rabbis of the time no less than 248 classes of things to be done; of things forbidden there were 365. There were no fewer than 39 principal classes of prohibitions laid down in the Mishnah (the post-biblical traditional doctrine of the Jews developed and represented by the rabbis before the 3rd century); from these many others were deduced. In other words, there were literally hundreds of laws to be obeyed; besides all those in the Torah, there were countless others which learned Jews had evolved; or various subtleties and refinements upon those which were old. In the dedicated art of picking religious nits, scarcely anyone of that day and time could come close to the Jewish rabbi.

A few more examples can be cited . . .

A veil had to hang before the Holy of Holies. How thick did it have to be? Only a hair breadth in thickness. And it had to be woven of exactly seventy-two twisted plaits, each consisting of twenty-four threads. Of the different colored threads in the veil, six would have to be white, six blue, six scarlet, and six gold. The veil would have to be forty cubits long and twenty cubits wide, and it would have to be made of eighty-two myriads. Before it could be used, no less than three hundred priests would have to immerse the veil.

And how would the Holy of Holies be dressed throughout all time? He

would wear only *seven* garments from the beginning of the world until the end. When he would finally come to forgive Israel's sin, he would wear white. The sixth garment he would put on when the son of David arrived on earth. Only when he punished the heathen would he finally wear the seventh garment—*the garment of vengeance*—and it would shine from one end of the earth to the other.

The two most famous Jewish teachers just before the time of Jesus were Shammai and Hillel. Shammai was a rigorist who believed in an unbending adherence to ritual; Hillel was more liberal. He even encouraged his disciples to read Greek literature. Within the two schools they established they differed on more than three hundred matters of law.

Their disciples disputed whether the evening prayer was to be offered in a standing posture or lying in bed. And what was the appropriate order for prayers after a meal? And should the towel used for drying one's hands be placed upon the table or upon the cushion used as a seat? To Hillel, the earth was created first. But no, said Shammai, the heavens were first, and God did his planning by the light of day and his creating by night. Nonsense, said Hillel, God both planned and created by day. The sacrificial lamb *presses* down the sins of Israel, declared Shammai, because the root word for lamb and for press is the same. Not so, argued Hillel, because that which is pressed down rises up, and so the sins would be released.

For Hillel the feast of Lights should last eight days and on each succeeding day a new candle should be lighted. For Shammai all the lights should be kindled at once. To Shammai all converts to Judaism were wicked and to be despised, but Hillel welcomed converts with open arms. Shammai believed that the wicked should be punished eternally in hell, but Hillel declared that God would never punish his children in such a manner. Hillel even believed that a circumcised non-Jew who was converted to Judaism need not be circumcised again, a point of view that the rigid Shammai could not tolerate. Shammai predicted that the Coming One would come with a sword and destroy all of Israel's enemies. But Hillel said no; he would come as a prince of peace. And on and on, *ad infinitum*, as they endeavored to serve the Jewish God by straining out gnats and swallowing camels.

In A.D. 67 a major rebellion broke out in Galilee because *seventeen* talents had been unlawfully appropriated from the treasury of the Temple. Nero was in power then and apparently this was the last fanatical straw the back of the Roman camel could bear. So he sent Vespasian to put an end to that ever-recurring rebellious nonsense (to save the Jews from themselves, as it were, although it is unlikely that Nero ever put it in quite those words).

Vespasian found that the city of Jerusalem had become a regular battlefield as three different Jewish factions fought for control of the Temple. So Vespasian isolated the city and left the inhabitants to starve while he subjugated the surrounding countryside. Within three years Nero died and Vespasian ascended to the throne. He promptly delegated Titus to finish the job that he had started. Only when Titus's troops surrounded the city—and this time it looked like the Romans really meant business—did the squabbling Jews join ranks in order to fight a common enemy. Even so, two Jewish factions—more than willing to prove that Jews will be Jews—started fight-

ing for control of the city's granary and succeeded only in burning it to the ground.

Attacking with battering rams, the Romans eventually destroyed the first wall and then the second, but the Jews would not surrender. They huddled in the city starving together, they killed each other over scraps of meat, they risked crucifixion to sneak out and steal food, and still they fought back by undermining the mounds of earth elevating the battering rams, and by clawing and slashing with such fury that the Romans had to retreat. So Titus just sealed them off. He built a high wall of earth around the city and began to wait them out.

Now Titus was a tough and hardened Roman soldier, one of the best, afraid of nothing. But maybe he was tired of killing fanatics; or perhaps he could see no real purpose in continuing. So he appealed to the Jews to surrender. Just cease fighting among yourselves and creating rebellious chaos and give the city over to Rome, was the essence of his plea.

In unison, the Jews answered with a resounding, NO. The city belonged to Yahweh, they said. They would agree to nothing that would prevent a Jew from being a Jew, no matter how sensible or peaceful or humanitarian.

In the end they were finally starved to the point where resistance was impossible; and so the Romans entered the city and slaughtered the survivors until they were too tired to wield their weapons; and when the destruction was over, Jerusalem, for the second time in its history, was smashed and burned and leveled to the ground. The Israelites were forced to leave Jerusalem—the withdrawal was virtually complete—and nothing was left but the Law and no Temple in which a scattered people could make sacrifice and worship their "Man of War," Yahweh.

It was a long, long time before the Jews (many of them non-Semitic Eastern Europeans who had converted to Judaism) made a triumphant but bloody "return" to Palestine. During the conflict involving the establishment of a national homeland for the Israelis in Palestine in the 20th century, 900,000 Palestinians (approximately 80 percent of the indigenous population) were dispossessed and scattered to all points of the compass within the Arab world. Here, from a publication of the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights in Jerusalem, are some statistics which describe that dispossession with chilling precision:

> The plan to make Arab Palestine into a Jewish state has involved the total destruction of 385 Arab villages leaving only 90 of the original 475 villages. In the district of Bethlehem, for example, all 23 Arab villages were destroyed, leaving only Jaffa city. All 31 villages in Ramleh district have been destroyed since 1948. Former Defense Minister Moshe Dyan has acknowledged that "There is not a single Jewish village in this country that has not been built on the site of an Arab village."

So once again the Jews sit astride that tiny land-bridge in Asia Minor like an angry colossus, self-righteous, unbending and ruthless. And, once again, Palestine, now called Israel, is the center of never-ending dissension and conflict.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

The Rape of the West

Blessed be ye poor . . . Woe unto you that are rich!
(Luke 6:20–24.)

The rich man's wealth is his strong tower, but the destruction of the poor is their poverty.
(Proverbs 10:15.)

For nearly two thousand years, the most powerful forces at work within the structure of Western civilization have been the theological superstitions of the Christian-Judaic system and the philosophical superstitions of Platonism—two forces which are basically alien to everything that constitutes the moral, social and creative qualities of the world's only authentic "progressives" and "humanitarians" . . . the people who have created the most libertarian, the most productive, and the most enviable societies on earth . . . the people of the Western world: WESTERN MAN.

A tangle of millennia ago, Western Man shuffled out of the preliterate abyss—his consciousness robed with awe and gravity and gorged with a plague of questions—peering into the superluminous gloom of a dismal, impending future . . . reading there a thought-kindling challenge, a prelude to a deluge of questing and bleeding and dying.

Western man . . . man the Thinker . . . the Wise . . . the Creator . . . the sons of the horizon chasers and fire tamers . . . the unravellers of every longitude and latitude who brought light to the dark corners of the globe . . . who paved the genetic highway leading to the world's greatest cultures . . . the forefathers of the earliest and greatest pharaohs, the Aryan conquistadors of India, the discoverers and builders of the New World, the Founding Fathers of America . . . the racial progenitors of Hammurabi, Aristotle, Julian, Michelangelo, Mozart, Dostoyevsky, Melville, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, the Wright brothers, Neil Armstrong, and legions more.

Western man . . . the abstracters and concreters . . . the inducers and deducers . . . the self-pacing, the energizers, the spatially aware . . . the moonwalkers and computer masters . . . melancholy exquisites knowing so well that truth deals only with the few . . . lighting the edge of his spherical world with the light of reason, a light that the idol and the idle Cross cannot extinguish . . . ever envisioning all that has turned the spaceship earth and its irreversible present into more than just a rotating graveyard.

How did it happen? From whence did Western man come?

At least three and one-half billion years ago biological life appeared on earth. In the Cosmic quest for self-consciousness it developed through ever higher and more complex forms. Perhaps seventy million years ago the primate line separated from the rest of the mammals; and twenty-five million years ago the ancestral line of today's *homo sapiens* split off from the pongids (manlike apes).

From the late Pliocene epoch four or five million years ago and well into the Pleistocene epoch, our early ancestors evolved—culturally, biologically and socially, and finally reached the *sapiens* level long before any of the non-Western races. Throughout the more than 600,000 years of the Middle Pleistocene era, European culture advanced from the crude handaxe stage to finely crafted implements of stone, wood and bone.

The Neanderthal period, which existed between 150,000 and 40,000 years ago, led to the development of the Cro-Magnon subrace on the one hand, and the widely varied group of racial types which have been classified as "Mediterranean" on the other. A tall, ruggedly built, large-headed subrace with a large degree of sexual differentiation, the Cro-Magnon people appeared and developed on the vast northern European plain, stretching from the Alps in the south to the North Sea and the Baltic Sea in the north, and from Ireland in the west to the Urals in the east.

Various Mediterranean types whose ancestors developed more or less separately from the Cro-Magnon subrace developed their homelands along the African and European shores of the Mediteranean Sea and in the Middle East.

The Alpine subrace was also derived from the Cro-Magnons through a complex of genetic changes involving a reduction in stature, a decrease in relative head length, and some Mediterranean admixture. The Alpine homeland is the mountain belt stretching across western and central Europe—a region where the Alpines have historically constituted the largest portion of the population.

At least 9000 years ago the Mediterraneans gained a strong numerical advantage over the Cro-Magnons and their Alpine relatives. Certain groups of these people, representing several varieties, were able to push northward and westward into Europe, initially swamping the sparse hunter-gatherer population. When the Cro-Magnons became farmers their population increased somewhat but not enough to overcome the Mediterranean numerical dominance that prevailed in many areas which had been Cro-Magnon. Most areas of Mediterranean penetration, therefore, became racially mixed with the ratio of Cro-Magnon to Mediterranean blood varying from place to place.

But then there appeared on the horizon of Europe another subrace. They were tall and fair, more rugged than the Mediterraneans, but not as sturdy as the Cro-Magnons, and wave after wave of them penetrated Europe. From the Steppes of southern Russia in the region between the Black Sea and the Caspian they came, bringing the arts of agriculture and farming with them. They were superb warriors, cattle breeders, artists and farmers, and 6000 years ago their language, art, religion and social customs replaced those of the peoples they conquered. They were the Nordics.

For the four millennia preceding the traditional beginning of the Christian

era Western man increased his numbers and expanded his exploration of the world around him; he exhibited impressive intellectual attainments and he produced written records which can be perused by historians. To these achievements must be added substantial improvements in agriculture and irrigation, the domestication of animals, the spinning of yarn and weaving of cloth, the construction of homes, fortifications and monuments, and the manufacture of pottery.

Since most white gentiles are woefully ignorant of the origins of Western man, the development of his culture, and many of his great achievements, perhaps a few words at this point regarding a representative cross-section of the spectrum of types within the White race might be instructive.

The Celts constitute one of the major North European stocks. Celtic speech belongs to the great Aryan family of languages. Its closest resemblance is to the Italic dialects. The Celts' homeland was in southern and western Germany. Only in later ages was the Rhine and Danube a frontier between Gauls and Teutons. As the Celts expanded they entrenched themselves in Gaul (France) and gave their name to the region. Racially the Celt contained much Nordic blood. The typical Celt was long-headed, blue-eyed and probably red or brown-haired. Chain mail was a Celtic invention and the naval architecture of Gaul was superior to that of Caesar's admirals. To the agricultural arts the Gaul contributed the *wheeled plough* which made it possible to farm rough land.

The Goths established themselves on the southern shore of the Baltic around the mouth of the Vistula before 300 B.C. Prior to that the Goths had lived in southern Sweden. Like the other German tribes of their time the Goths were tall, sturdily built and Nordic in coloration with blue or grey eyes and hair colors ranging from red to almost white.

The Slavs were, like the Celts, Germans, and Balts (and also the earliest Romans and Greeks), an Indo-European people and, therefore, of the Nordic race. Of all the Indo-European peoples who carved out new homelands for themselves in Europe during the Neolithic and the early Bronze Age, the Ancestors of the Slavs stayed closest to the ancient homeland in the steppes of southern Russia.

Teuton (*Teutones*) was one of many of the earliest German tribal names recorded by the Romans. "Teutonic" comes from the same root as the word the inhabitants of modern Germany (*Deutschland*) apply to themselves and their language. Hence, the widespread use in the English-speaking world of "Teuton" and "Teutonic" in referring to Germans and things German. The *Franks* arose after Caesar's time as a confederation of many German tribes.

The Picts, or *Picti*, were Celts native to Scotland—called Caledonia by the Romans. The Scots, or *Scotti*, were actually Celts who sailed over from Ireland. The race of the English, or Saxons (*Anglorum sive Saxonum gens*), came from several strong tribes of Germany including the Saxons, the Angles, the Jutes, along with Franks, Frisians and Suebians. The Angles eventually gave their name to the newly conquered land (England, or "Angle-land"). Later the people and their culture came to be known as "Anglo-Saxon."

The Aryans, according to current views, originated in the vicinity of South Russia. They migrated into Central Europe from which point their blood and

culture radiated out to every corner of Europe. They seem to have been a more rugged race than the Mediterraneans but not as robust as present-day Nordics. Ancient Chinese chronicles tell of an incursion of red-haired, green-eyed invaders from the west and north. At least 4000 years ago there may have been a belt of fair-haired, light-eyed proto-Aryans stretching from the Polish swamps to East Siberia.

Prehistoric Greece was in the hands of the olive-skinned, fine-boned Mediterranean. After the Aryans swept into Greece, the Mediterranean tongues completely disappeared. The mythology of ancient Greece is filled with the coming of the North European. Apollo, for instance, is believed to be a Northern or Aryan god. To an important degree the Hellenic Aryans humanized the cultures of the Mediterranean peoples. Aryan art and science were cultivated with realism and reason as the guiding principles. The Hellenes were the first to proportion beauty and make it the standard of their art. The formalism of Egypt cannot compare to the living grace of Greek sculpture and design. Greek science and philosophy concerned itself with the entire domain of Nature. To the Aryan Greeks materialistic truth was more important than supernatural fantasies. Hippocrates separated religion from therapeutics and became the father of medicine. Polybius made history a cause-and-effect phenomenon instead of tales of supernatural interferences in the affairs of men and became the father of modern history. Another Aryan invention was constitutional government. This we owe to Solon.

The Aryans also penetrated Italy and mixed with such Mediterranean peoples as the Siculs and Ligurians. While the Aryans were forceful enough to impose their language on the peoples of Italy, they were not sufficiently numerous to change the racial character of the Mediterraneans there. The Umbro-Sabellians brought in a fresh Aryan transfusion but this was counterbalanced by more different Ligurian and Etruscan (a non-Aryan people from Asia-Minor who claimed an Asiatic origin) strains. The Nordic Celts were involved to a small degree, but not enough to exert any influence on Rome during her early formative period. The Slave-rebellion leader, Spartacus, was of Thracian (an Aryan nation) descent and his troops were made up of Thracians and gladiators from Nordic Gaul. The Roman people developed an organizing genius that enabled them to unify Italy and make it the center of world empire; and out of the self-discipline and moral regularity of the Aryan Latins came the laws which lie at the roots of sound Western government.

It was Western man then who sowed the seeds of realism and reason in the fertile soil of Greece and Rome.

Indeed, the startling brilliance of the Westerner dates all the way back to the Cro-Magnons when artistic genius first appeared in the human race. They decorated the walls of their caves with paintings that have never been matched by primitive peoples of other races. And they played music in their dwellings and within the golden rooms their fires carved out of the night. Some twenty flutes made of bird bone have been found, each with two sets of three stops, each set producing a strikingly different quality of tone. The music these instruments produce has been described by one expert as being "very rich and warm, not at all light or airy—very serious."

These magnificent *first ingeniously innovative people* were certainly among

the ancestors of today's White race—the race that created the glory of ancient Greece, the grandeur of Rome, the Renaissance, the Scientific and Agricultural revolutions, the English language, just about all the great music, lasting literature, architecture and art in the world, and all the great developments of American technology that have improved the quality of human existence: miracle drugs and fabrics; miraculous food production and distribution; miraculous means of communications, travel, and entertainment; and from the cue-tip to the computer, an endless array of products and concepts that make the world a better place for more people.

In the entire history of the world, only about a dozen civilizations capable of creating admirable buildings, art, literature and philosophy still worth studying have grown up more or less independently. Only one—*the civilization of Western man*—did not halt and stagnate. Only in the West have people gone on to the level of indefinitely expanding science to a degree capable of exploring outer space and actually setting foot upon the moon.

"How is it," asked a Red Chinese dissident recently, "that the United States has been able to do in 200 years more than we have done in 4,000?"

This remarkably candid statement would not come as much of a surprise to most Americans of the white gentile "persuasion," were it not for that massive fabrication factory known as the American educational system which, for several decades now, has attempted to prove that any seemingly outstanding achievements on the part of Western man are little more than accidental. The purpose: to eliminate any consideration of, or emphasis on, RACE, as it might apply to the White equation. The merest thought that a White child might somehow get the idea that the Westerner is in any way *unique*, or that race might have some bearing upon the quality or probable success of the culture complex of the White race, is enough to send "sensitive" Christians, ultra-liberals, and the hordes of Marxists and minority racists (the preachers of egalitarianism in the U.S. who never seem to be concerned with its practice in Russia or Israel) who labor in the vineyards of American education into paroxysms of concern.

The aim has been to convince students (particularly White students) that all living peoples, regardless of difference in appearance or behavior, are nothing more than blood brothers in a very strict and accurate sense of the term. It would be difficult to find a textbook dealing with history or social studies in the United States that does not propound this message. (Not only race, it must be noted, but language, education, art—all of the underpinnings of Western culture—are under savage attack in America today by minority racists and socialists who hide their true intentions behind a "liberal" facade.)

The very first point made in this assault is that Europe, the home of the Westerner, never contributed anything to the origins of civilization. According to the mind-benders of modern education, the earliest "cradles of historic civilizations" were in the Near East—the Nile Valley of Africa and the "Fertile Crescent" of Asia, including the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. Even the residents of the Indus River Valley of India and the Yellow River Valley of China were supposedly far more productive and civilized than the Europeans who, we are taught, were in a state of "unpromising barbarism."

What lies at the end of this road is easy to perceive.

The White child is impressed with the *vigorous* and *creative* attributes of Semites, Africans and Orientals; and the racial fires of Black, Jewish and Asian children are fanned by the thought that their peoples were responsible for the birth of the earliest civilized societies.

As this scenario is pursued in the mediums of American communications (education, entertainment, and even news outlets), Western civilization is portrayed as a relatively recent product and Western man as little more than an accident who came along later, and by a clever use of *other people's* labor and ideas (all of the basic techniques, institutions and concepts which Westerners "adopted and have used ever since" were invented by the peoples of the ancient Near East, you see) created something of a civilization. Not only did we acquire the principle of the alphabet, pen and ink writing, and everything worthwhile in the fields of engineering, mathematics, astronomy and other sciences from the East, we are further indebted to those ultra-wise Semites and Orientals for the territorial state and the norms of government and, finally, even religion—or so the Liberal-Christian-Judaic story goes. And to top it all off we have been able to study the ebb and flow of Semitic and Oriental human social energy for more than three thousand years. (Wow! How lucky can you get?)

Since the first John Dewey brigade assailed the American institutions of higher learning preaching (1) that in the molding of the human biological organism, environment is everything and reason is nothing, (2) that the primary goal of education is to destroy a child's individualistic traits, and (3) that education is a process for living and not a preparation for future living, the American educational system has been dedicated to ruthlessly stamping out the "pernicious" theory that racial identity, as it applies to Whites, has anything to do with determining the character of a civilization or with the establishing of a remarkable culture. In addition, 20th century educators have presented American history as a *class struggle*, while scheming in every way at the same time to induce a *minority mentality* among non-white Americans. As a result, *minorityism* is now a raging social disease in the U.S.A. with a double standard odious to the extreme. For instance, a Black African or an Oriental Semite can brag about having created the first civilized cultures on earth; they can even assert that they are ethnically superior to all other races; but for a White child to even think in similar terms represents the grossest kind of modern heresy. White majority Americans dare not claim that their culture is unique because it represents the traditions of their ancestors; that would be chauvinism. If the same thing is claimed by a minority, it is called "ethnic pride." It is the "duty" of the majority to *tolerate* and *understand* the minority's values and customs; while the minority can proclaim that its soul is beyond the comprehension of the outsider, therefore a racist condemnation of the majority is justified.

Indeed, 20th century American culture has become infected with minorityism to the degree that the worst hypocrites in our society are white gentile liberals who masochistically enjoy championing every race but the White race. The most venomous racists, on the other hand, are minority racists—people whose works literally abound in modern libraries and bookstores. Black author James Baldwin, for instance: "It is not necessary for a black man to hate a white man . . . in order to realize that he must kill him."

And Norman Mailer: "WASPs are the most barbaric, root-destroying people on earth!" And Susan Sontag, who describes the white race as "the cancer of history."

And what of the obsessive racism practiced by so many Jews without criticism by the community at large? According to Jewish writer James Yaffe, Jews use Jewish doctors 95% of the time and Jewish lawyers 87% of the time—a pernicious form of racism that says, in effect, "I will sell to gentiles, but I will only buy from Jews." White gentiles who acted in like manner would be damned with the harshest kind of language. Because of the racial double standard that has developed in America, however, the holier-than-thou minorities—who always act as if they have the market cornered on both suffering and morality—are the untouchables of our age. Will modern America be able to survive the four horsemen of the modern apocalypse: liberalism, minorityism, Marxism and Freudianism? Perhaps not—since the fanatics within the gate may be more dangerous than the enemy without.

Turning once again to the egalitarians, they do admit that certain people within the Caucasian division of mankind showed some originative capacity—the Mediterraneans, they mean. But they are quick to add that the Nordics and the Alpines (the lighter-skinned members of the White race) are not to be included in that category. And while the early Egyptians are accepted as being generally of the Mediterranean type, little credence can be given to White contributions there, they emphasize, since several other discernible strains, including Negroid, were present.

As the ultimate stab in the back, the anti-White coalition (since Christianity is rooted in Oriental Semitism, most White Christians—the world's most blatant racial traitors—feel compelled to support the claims of the anti-White coalition) teaches that the advancements of Western man are easily explainable, not because of any nasty biological superiority, mind you, but because of geographical location, access to abundant natural resources, a spacious and varied environmental setting, and last, but far from the very least, all of the stimulating contacts with those *other* cultures. As all but the most bigoted or hopelessly retarded Westerner can easily see, Western man walked on the moon in the 20th century because of all the exhilarating contacts he has had with diverse peoples like Khazar Jews, Chinese coolies, African Hottentots and rain-forest Pygmies—not to mention such dynamic and charismatic individuals as Lenin, Ho Chi Minh, Pol Pot, Pancho Villa and Idi Amin.

Unhappily for the egalitarians and their apologiae, history cannot be suppressed, or slanted, or twisted totally out of shape forever. Even Marxist and Jewish myths are not immortal.

We know now that radiocarbon (carbon-14 or C-14) dating does not remain constant as was originally thought. Instead, C-14 fluctuates. For any date prior to 1000 B.C. the radiocarbon dates fall increasingly short of the actual dates. A tree ring *known* to date from 2100 B.C., for example, yielding a radiocarbon date of 1600 B.C., is actually 500 years too young. In the simplest terms this means that everything discovered in Europe is *much older* than originally thought.

It means that tombs, tools and gold objects found in Brittany and Scotland were actually developed by local craftsmen and not brought in from the

Aegean or others areas. It means that the rich, early Bronze Age of Britain was well under way before the Mycenaean civilization of Greece even began. It means that Europeans created tools and gold objects at a time when gold was unknown to Semites and Orientals. It means that Brittany's megalithic sites are many hundreds of years older than previously thought . . . that tombs found in Germany and Spain are really older than those found in Crete . . . that copper tools were made in Europe as early as 4500 B.C. . . . that the Malta temples are older than the Egyptian pyramids . . . that the earliest known gold treasures so far found anywhere in the world were the result of the knowledgeable, inventive and sophisticated Europeans. As for that remarkable and enigmatic structure Stonehenge, it can now be claimed as the world's oldest astronomical observatory.

We now have reason to believe that the ruling class in ancient Egypt were of what may have been the original Libyan stock, a blond, Nordic-like people thought to be descended from the Cro-Magnon; the peasant class was racially Mediterranean. About ten times in history the Egyptian ruling class died out, always to be replaced by a new wave of white invaders. But when the Egyptians began importing as slaves Negroes from the south of Egypt to mix with the Mediterraneans, the threat to the racial integrity of the ruling class began to accelerate. As long as 5000 years ago the pharaoh was employing Negroes by the tens of thousands, not only as laborers, but also as warriors. Certain pharaohs tried to restrict Negro immigration, even inflicting the death penalty for violations; but to no avail. There were 3000 years of progress under the white ruling class followed by 3000 years of stagnation as the "law of racial degeneration" (the less innovative and creative type will invariably outbreed the more creative and drive it into extinction) turned Egypt into a quagmire of miscegenation. (America is following that same path today.) The hand-cranked Archimedean water screw was invented over 2200 years ago by a member of the White race. For obvious reasons, the theologists of egalitarianism make no attempt to explain why today's Negroid Egyptians, primitive by Western standards, are *still* using that ancient instrument to irrigate their fields.

Long before Columbus, Leif Erikson, or any of the recent "discoverers" of America arrived on the scene, the Celts, far from their homeland in southern and western Germany, had extensive settlements in what is now the continental U.S. as early as 900 B.C. They settled throughout what is now New England and as far inland as Iowa; they conducted extensive trade with northern Europe and with Mediteranean nations many centuries before the rise of the Roman Empire. Words from the Celtic tongue (Gaelic, the ancient language of Ireland, and Ogam) are common in American Indian languages. Old paintings show that the eastern Algonquins closely resemble southern European and Mediterranean people. It is possible that light-skinned or Nordic Libyans, the ancient world's most brilliant navigators, settled the Mississippi watershed around 1000 to 800 B.C. It is possible too that they were joined by Celts, Iberians and Phoenicians. Many of the great burial mounds are in reality the work of these colonists rather than the primeval, Mongoloid Indians.

Significantly, the categories of achievement just cited barely scratch the surface of Western genius and creativity. Within the realm of the intelligent

use of the mind to investigate, to identify and to comprehend the natural structure of the world, at least 600 years before the repressive Christian-Judaic system began, Ionian Greek physicists started the world on an orderly, naturalistic interpretation of the cosmos. They discovered the uniformity of nature and the analysis of cause and effect in materialistic terms; and in just a few centuries they achieved more in the fields of mathematics, astronomy, physics and medicine *than had been achieved in all previous history*.

But then, like a thunderclap of doom, the emergence of and the adoption of Christianity by the White race (the acceptance of the Jewish Bible as the foundation and basis of a religion for white Gentiles) traumatized the Western world and virtually halted (in some cases even destroyed) the great advances of Western man. In one fell, fanatical swoop, *stagnation was substituted for progress, theology for science, rigidity for flexibility and intolerance for humanization*.

The establishment of Christianity in the West represents one of the *greatest tragedies* that has ever befallen the human race; it represents one of the most *momentous revolutions* in the history of thought; and it represents the *most fateful turning point* in the history of the Western world: that point in history when we traded the maturity of the golden age of Greece for the emotional illiteracy of the Hebrew holy books . . . when we gave up the achievements of thinkers and scientists, of artists, philosophers, poets and statesmen, for the revelations of fanatical and wild-eyed prophets and a gospel of worldly renuciation . . . that fateful moment in time when we rejected the greatest champion of the human mind who had ever lived—*Aristotle* (for whom the ideal life was one of *self-fulfillment*, as opposed to Plato, for whom the ideal life was essentially one of *renunciation*).

For Aristotle God was not an all-seeing dictator, arbitrarily rewarding or punishing his children at will. God was instead, a mere logical necessity, a celestial clockmaker who wound up the universe and walked away forever . . . a Prime Mover who is himself Unmoved . . . a supernatural substance apart from natural substances . . . an impersonal force, with no desire to interfere capriciously with the laws of nature or the ways of man. Aristotle—the champion of nature, as against the supernaturalism of Plato—maintained that there is only one reality: the world men perceive by means of their physical senses; that reality is comprised of concrete individual entities, each with a definite nature, and each obeying laws inherent in nature; that the universe is an orderly intelligible natural realm open to the mind of man; and that man is a worthy being, capable of understanding the universe, which is, in turn, worthy of man's interest and study.

Aristotle, the father of logic, the great philosophical friend of Western man and the champion of *reason* as the only legitimate means of knowledge, died around 322 B.C. leaving an enormous amount of literary work and a refutation of Platonic doctrine which was ignored for sixteen centuries. (It was Coleridge who coined the generalization, "Every man is born either a Platonist or an Aristotelian"—meaning that people must put their faith in *natural* things like the Aristotelians or in *supernatural* things like the Platonists.) Before considering the all-important philosophy of Plato, some indications of the instability within the early Church itself must be considered.

In another chapter, I cited the psychological appeal of the Christian doctrines along with the universality of that appeal as being among the principal reasons for the success of the early Church. Even so, Christianity faced nearly overwhelming difficulties because of violent conflicts over internal divisions.

At least one major division of belief in the faith is worth noting in detail. The schism developed over the teachings of Marcion, a shipmaster of Pontius, who believed with Paul that the crucifixion of the *Christos*, who was identical with God, was a mystic source of salvation compared with which the sacrifice of an individual was nothing. In other ways, though, he and Paul differed greatly.

Marcion, who came to prominence in the 2nd century, was greatly influenced by the anti-Old Testament sect of Gnosticism. He taught that the creator God of the Old Testament had nothing to do with Christ or with the good God, or God of love, who had begot him. The Old Testament law was wrongly applied, he asserted, with impossible demands and merciless retaliation. The Jewish God was an incompetent troublemaker who was responsible for man's fall into sin—a sanguinary, wrathful and jealous God. To Marcion, the Christ abolished this law and along with it the entire Old Testament. Then he revealed the unknown High God. Marcion differed from the Roman churchmen in holding that Christianity was a new religion which had been revealed all at once to Paul. From the words of Paul, Marcion took his theme: "The God of this world had blinded the minds of the unbelievers." He took an expurgated version of Paul's letters and purified Luke to be the *only* Christian Bible, sans everything else including the Old Testament.

Tragically, Marcion lost his fight to simplify and de-Judaize his religion. The resistance aroused by Marcion's beliefs helped to serve the purpose of forging the major elements of the Christian creed—the Christianity that regards itself as a continuation and fulfillment of the covenant history portrayed in the Scriptures: *The Word of God is a single, cumulative stream of revelation . . . The supreme revelation of God is the Christ . . . We know God in Christ and through Christ . . . All wisdom is the fear of the Lord, and in all wisdom there is the fulfillment of the law.*

By the 4th century Christianity had the good fortune to win the favor of the Emperor Constantine, at one time an Apollo sun-worshiper, but who had been motivated to turn toward Christianity by the example of his father Constantius and by certain influential Christians in the court. By A.D. 313, he declared in the Edict of Milan for the equality of all religions, and shortly thereafter, he openly began to favor the Christians, even though he was disturbed by the raucous arguments among theologians like the scholar Arius and Bishop Alexander. Since there was no official creed and no clearcut way to determine what was heretical and what was orthodox, Constantine called for that famous general council of the Church at Nicaea in A.D. 325—which resulted in the infamous Nicene Creed. The packed vote of the assembled council members was decided in favor of Bishop Alexander, who had once declared, "They are two, for the Father is Father, and the Son is not the same . . . but their nature is one, for the Begotten is not dissimilar to the Begetter, but his image, and everything that is the Father's is also

the Son's." (A masterpiece of convolution, if ever there was one.) And thus Jesus the Christ and the Jewish God Yahweh were officially declared to be one; and all thought of Jesus being created, subordinate or human was put aside once and for all.

Constantius, the strongest of the three sons of the baptized Constantine, succeeded to the throne and made himself the sole emperor. The first Christian-bred emperor, he called himself "His Eternity" and "Lord of the Universe." He closed the pagan temples in response to Christian entreaties, and he decreed that all who used them or offered sacrifice should be put to death. Thus, within fifty years of the time when the Christians were subjected to some persecutions, the new religion was officially persecuting pagans. Indeed, capital punishment for heretics was employed as early as A.D. 385. (How ironic that those who have been persecuted invariably forget so quickly the fundamental inequity and ultimate futility of persecuting people for the offense of religious belief.)

The Emperor Julian, Constantius's successor, was the last emperor of Rome possessing any intellectual capacity whatever. He had never openly declared for the Christian church and he disdained its irrational theories and bitter quarrels. Before Constantine's time, Mithraism had been favored by the state, and Julian, who leaned in that direction, declared for a restoration of paganism generally. He opposed the persecution of anyone for worshiping any deity so long as he kept the peace. He ordered property restored to the pagans, he recalled banished heretics, he abolished the special privileges of the Christian priests, and in a stroke of genius that would have almost obliterated the new creed in the course of a generation, he put pagan teachers in charge of the schools. It is entirely possible that only Julian's untimely death saved Christianity from disintegration and ultimate collapse. After only twenty months in power, Julian died in battle with the Persians.

Even with the death of the pro-pagan Julian, the Christian creed continued to inherit shaky ground because of internal strife and bitter recriminations as it divided and subdivided on questions of dogma, with each controversy leaving a wake of exiled or murdered theologians. Near the end of the 4th century, the faith received another reprieve when Theodosius the Great reinforced the laws of Constantine. With renewed enthusiasm, the Christians promptly returned to destroying the pagan temples and confiscating pagan property. They were so arduous in their efforts that even Emperor Theodosius was appalled. He promulgated a law to prevent the despoiling of the pagans and all they possessed, but it was seldom enforced and soon totally neglected.

In the meantime, Augustine and the Neoplatonists were busily engaged in forging a philosophic fabric that would enable Christianity to blend more thoroughly and more quickly with the Graeco-Roman gentile world—and with an assault on reason and naturalism that matched the primitive supernaturalism of the Jews.

Augustine was born in A.D. 345 near Carthage of a pagan father and a Christian mother. After experimenting for a time with the heretical sect of Manichaeism he came under the influence of the mystical theories of Neoplatonism as propounded by Plotinus and Porphyry who influenced him to seek truth *outside* of the material world. Under Ambrose he studied the

Christian creed and soon began to blend Neoplatonic mysticism and Christian legend. He was the first to attempt to unify all Christian doctrines into a body of belief that would have no internal contradictions. His approach to theology involved the technique of investigating the truth or falsity of opinions by arguing from certain explicitly stated but not necessarily substantiated premises. The only explanations of evil available to him were in the religious writings of the Jews and Christians; and thus he arrived at the beliefs that man had been created perfect (an unsubstantiated premise, if ever there was one), something had happened to destroy that perfection, and the authority of the Scriptures should never be questioned. As part of his logical persuasion, Augustine provided Christianity with that depraved doctrine, based on the defilement of sexual intercourse, of infant damnation and the necessity of redemption by baptism.

And this brings us to the most influential philosopher in the history of the Western world, the Greek thinker Plato (B.C. 427–347)—the first philosopher to formulate a systematic view of the nature of reality, with a collectivist, statist politics as its culmination.

To Plato, the "apparent" world of sense was more important than the "real" world of ideas. The material world, he declared, is only an imperfect appearance of true reality, a semi-real reflection or projection of it. Any investigation of nature is to be disdained and avoided. As for human beings, they are not ultimately real. Man is an immortal soul temporarily inhabiting a meaningless house of clay. What is real about men is only the Form which they share in common and reflect. Thus, no man by himself is metaphysically autonomous; all men ultimately comprise *one* unity. In society, then, each man must strive to merge himself into the collective, becoming one with it and living only to serve its welfare. "We must be free from the body," said Plato, "and use the eye of the soul alone to behold the actual realities. Otherwise, we will never know anything. We must keep ourselves free from nature until God himself sets us free."

This blind faith in supernatural absolutes was the element of Academic philosophy that by way of Neoplatonism was transmitted to the early Christian church. *Contempt for the world of matter, belief in the liberation of the soul through asceticism and mystic revelation, the subordination of reason to faith, and a blueprint for turning human beings into anthill collectivists*, made this philosophy especially congenial to the Christian-Judaic mystics who were building the new creed. (Unable to completely ignore his Greek heritage, Plato exhibited a certain authentic respect for reason, a respect which was implicit in Greek philosophy; but the *worst* elements of Plato, not the best, came to dominate the Western world and led to such monsters of collectivism as Kant, Hegel, Saint Simon, Proudhon, Marx, Hitler, Marcuse, and the facinorous modern "liberal" who is blind enough to believe that an exalted state can solve all economic and social problems without endangering free speech, orderly justice and free government.)

Seven centuries after Plato's death, a Christian bishop, Theophilus, at the order of the Christian emperor Theodosius, burned the great pagan library at Alexandria, a monumental storehouse of the treasures and scientific writings of antiquity. Virtually the entire library—nearly half a million volumes or scrolls, many of them collected from the farthest points on earth visited

by the ships of the time—were destroyed in this one barbarous assault on the precious products of the human mind. Greek mysticism (Neoplatonism) and Christian-Judaic apocalypticism joined hands in applying the torch that ignited that literary holocaust which contributed so much to the halting of the progressive Westerner virtually in his tracks. Galen the physician, Ptolemy the geographer, and Diophantus the mathematician, were the last in their respective fields to follow the classic tradition, as Lucian was the last exponent of Hellenic skepticism, and Julian the last emperor to defend religious tolerance. In 529 Justinian closed the schools at Athens, the last to teach Greek philosophy. In the 6th century Pope Gregory the Great condemned *all* literature and intellectual effort. Prayer and exorcism over science, religious over geometrical theorems, the Scriptures over any other literature, were to be the Christian way of life. All experiments in chemistry, physics and medicine were condemned. By the time of the persecution of Galileo (1564–1642), mathematicians were denounced as the greatest of all heretics.

So it came to pass that after about five hundred years of conflict waged with anathema, excommunication and banishment, and aided by torture, poison and the use of gladiators and even armies, the Christian power-mongers finally framed a doctrine that could not be undone by its enemies—a theology preaching that reason was of no avail and disagreement or heresy doomed men to eternal torment. Little wonder Tertullian was motivated to exclaim, "I believe because it is impossible!" Ignatius Loyola, Founder of the Jesuits, echoed similar sentiments in the 16th Century: ". . . the white that I see I would believe to be black, if the Hierarchial Church were to rule it . . ." And we have "Catholic World" (August 1871) to thank for these poignant words: "We have no right to ask reason of the Church . . ." (Now who, I wonder, would ask reason of the Church?)

From the very beginning the established church was paranoid—always in conflict with those who did not believe, or with the nasty heretic who had differing Christian viewpoints. By the end of the 4th century a new law defined a heretic as "all those who even in a minor matter deviate from the opinion and path of the Catholic religion." Criticism was shackled by an overwhelming respect for authority—a respect rooted in fear, ignorance and superstition. Human reason was forced to succumb entirely to the tyranny of the clergy and the wasting debility of insoluble theological ranklings. Any sense of value, purpose and mission was directed toward repressive ends: the establishment of the belief in the *Christian* religion and the *Christian* God through force; the destruction of anyone or anything which threatened the faith; the paranoiac belief that any opposing point of view existed as the direct result of the forces of evil (Satanism) to subvert and destroy Christians; the unyielding perpetuation of the belief that the Church must be the final arbiter of all human endeavors from faith to morals, from philosophy to science, from law to medicine. (Since these principles, when applied in practice, recognize no morality and no individual rights, nothing can result from them but brutality.)

And like Judaism, the new church was obsessed with the *Chosen* concept. It decreed that Christianity was the ONE true and chosen religion of God, that ONLY Christians could be saved, and that as many non-Christians should

be converted (by force, if necessary) as possible; and all who refused should be destroyed or condemned. As soon as the power-conscious leaders of the gentile world were convinced that the Christian-Judaic-Platonist system would serve their interests (the new religion provided the theological and political chains necessary to bind people's minds and souls), they began to force the baptism of their subjects en masse. According to Augustine, at least ten thousand Angli were forcibly baptized in one day. Heraclius baptized one hundred thousand people in one year. Charlemagne decreed that any who rejected baptism should be put to death. Scandinavia was Christianized during two bloody centuries of warfare. And it has been estimated that the Christianizing of the whole of Europe cost from eight to ten million lives.

Many fine scholars—Coulton, Delisle, Guerard, Lamprecht, Lea, Maitland, Michelet, Taylor, Verriest, among them—have thoroughly chronicled the horrors of the past two thousand years: the endless religious warfare waged against heresy (including the Inquisition), the millions who were persecuted for witchcraft for at least five centuries, the innumerable wars that were waged between Protestants and Catholics because of fanatical religious differences rooted in obscure and paradoxical doctrines, and the bloody and destructive Crusades. So we will spare the reader any further details.

The origins of one of the most repulsive of Christian doctrines must be explained, however, because of the suggestions on the part of some apologists that the Jews are blameless in the establishment of the belief that unearned guilt must be passed on to the human species. I am referring, of course, to the doctrine of Original Sin.

Beginning with Jewish literature, Sirach (B.C. 200–175) charged that the birth of sin had its origin in women, therefore "we all die." Did he mean that a single woman was the *first cause* of sin? Or did he mean that sinning *begins with women generally*? Not that it matters a great deal, since this belief greased the skids for the story of Eve's guilt. And it does not end there. The inheriting of a moral scar from the actions of Adam as a consequence of the serpent episode is suggested in the Book of the Secrets of Enoch. The Apocalypse of Baruch (A.D. 80–150) presents the Fall as having brought upon mankind a potentiality or liability to future punishment. And II Esdras (A.D. 50–150) stresses that all men are born wicked in consequence of Adam's sin.

Put it all together—the Hebrew "Adam and Eve" myth, the birth of sin having its origin in women, the guilt of all people because of Adam's sin (the sowing of the grain of evil seed in Adam), the inheriting of guilt because of the serpent episode, plus the common Jewish belief that the orthodox should not even know or touch a woman—and it is easy to see that very little imagination was necessary on the part of the Christians for them to borrow the original sin concept from the Orphics and apply it to the betrayals (first Eve betrayed Adam, and then Adam betrayed God) in the Garden. It is absurd to suggest, therefore, that Judaism plays a negligible role in the Christian affirmation of original sin. Indeed, it is a safe assumption that without the Judaic emphasis on the inheritance of moral scars from one's forebears, original sin would never have become a Christian doctrine.

In very short order, the Christians became blindly intoxicated with that very first principle of their faith. ("If the diplomacy of Christian life is to

be workable," the theologians declared, "it must rest on the assumption of original sin and universal guilt.") Apart from the major vices, which were determined by Cassian as being gluttony, fornication, avarice, anger, dejection, languor, vainglory and pride, the concept of the abstract contamination of the entire human race with sin because of those transgressions in the Garden provided an excuse for evil and suffering in God's world. With one masterful, psychological stroke the unpalatable world of sin, sickness, suffering and death was explained. (With that same stroke, woman was condemned throughout the Christian system, and even blamed for the death of Jesus Christ.) WE, in the form of our *original parents*, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God. Ah, but there is a way out—for those who wish to take it, that is. (All others will be doomed to perdition forever.) Only through the sacraments of just ONE Church and by obedience to just ONE God can that terrible sin be lifted from our souls and we can be redeemed in the eyes of God. *The power this one Satanically immoral doctrine gave to the Church cannot be overestimated.*

A further apology for Judaism is made by those who like to emphasize that the evils in Christianity stem solely from the beliefs of Pythagoras and Plato. The fact remains, however, that the Jewish holy books (the Old Testament) combined with the Christian and Platonist influenced beliefs of Augustine (*man is crooked and sordid, bespotted and ulcerous, an evil creature whose body is loathsome because it is material, the mind is impotent because it is human, pleasure is evil, virtue consists of renunciation, life is a prison where man is doomed to pain, misery, calamity . . .*) provided the dogmatist, the bigot, the man of faction, the literalist, the bureaucrat, the disciplinarian, the sadist, and the masochist, with everything they need to justify their will, and give sanction to their zealous schemes. (Is it any wonder that theological excogitation frequently produces a piousness beyond the intentions of thought and above the meaning of determination?) And we must not forget—as we noted elsewhere—that the Jewish Bible provided a sanction for every form of cruelty in *God's very own words*, including the death penalty for witchcraft and the burning to death by fire of the wicked.

Most significant of all is the fact that the Jews were the first people on earth to blend religiosity with aristocracy . . . to introduce racism and intolerance into the theological equation . . . to divide the world into only two kinds of people: the good and the evil; the right and the wrong; the Jews and the non-Jews. And thus it is that the Jews have always preached that they are the Chosen people of God . . . that they are the true salt of the earth, intellectually and morally superior to all other peoples . . . that all good things of the earth should belong to them . . . that Judaism is the perfect religion with the highest standard of wisdom and ethics developed by the human race . . . and that to fool and cheat gentiles wherever and whenever possible is a right and not a wrong.

Fully inheriting this aristocracy of religious emotions from the Jews, the Christians also divided the world into only two kinds of people: the good and the evil; the right and the wrong; the Christians and the non-Christians. And thus it is that the Christians have always preached the immoral doctrine that Christianity is the only true religion . . . that only devout Christians can be saved from damnation . . . that as many non-Christians should be

converted (by force, if necessary) as possible . . . and that all who refused, or who threatened the faith, should be destroyed.

Well into the 20th century, Christians were still promulgating these intolerant attitudes. As late as 1956, a Catholic spokesman, the Very Rev. Francis J. Connel, was quoted in *Time* magazine as follows: "However much we may esteem our non-Catholic brethren personally, and admire their sincerity and fervor in the practice of their religion, we must remember that their religion is false and that its practice is opposed to the commandment of Jesus Christ that all men profess the one religion which he established." And consider the measured, chilling words of one Cardinal Billot, spoken in 1922: "We must say that material force is rightly employed to protect religion, to coerce those who disturb it, and generally speaking to remove those things which impede our spiritual aim: nay, that force can have no more noble use than this . . ." ('Nuff said, I trust.)

There is in most people the belief that what *has* occurred in the past was, without question, the *best* that could have happened, and under no circumstances could the past have been any better if the philosophical, political or religious systems of any particular time or era had been different. At best, this viewpoint is simplistic, self-serving, short-sighted and fanciful.

By all reasonable standards, it is highly unlikely that the past seventeen centuries could have been *more* evil or destructive under any other system of belief for the simple reason that the White race chose as the basis of their theological beliefs the most *alien* faith on the face of the earth (alien to the West, that is)—JUDAISM. On the other hand, it is highly probable that if Western man had developed any OTHER religion on earth or, preferably, had developed a religion having its roots in *his own way of life*, the past that we now call Christian would have been INFINITELY BETTER than it was: *less cruel, less superstitious, less rigid, less intolerant*. But the people of the West, a people with an *agricultural* psychology, chose the religion of a people with a *desert* psychology, a religion both foreign and threatening to the Westerner, a religion destined to produce chaos and schizophrenia when he attempted to create an equally closed religious society.

The scholar Sumner points out with much insight that the change from the mother family to the father family "is the greatest and most revolutionary in the history of civilization." The Hebrews had no divine mother. And when the white gentiles of the Western world accepted a religion rooted in the beliefs of the Jews, they accepted a father family—a totalitarian patriarchy that has done more than anything else to shape the world of the West as it is today. The idealization of the family relationship is the most basic element to be found in religion. In the idealization of the family relationship within Christianity, nearly all the emphasis was (and is) on the son in keeping with motherless and daughterless Judaism (there is no Christian daughter; and the late blooming Madonna—the Virgin mother of Jesus—is a poor substitute for either mother or daughter); the results: The virtues and qualities peculiar to the female sex played virtually no part in shaping the values and institutions of the schizoid Western world; and hostility between father and son was inevitable.

Not only are Judaism and Christianity two different religions, they represent two strikingly different world views. Consequently, there is a fun-

damental difference in outlook between the Semitic mind and the Western mind. The Semitic mind has always placed intense stress on the personality of a tribal god along with enormous emphasis on a total surrender to that patriarchal god. It was essential to the Semite that he belong to a totally collectivized tribal world, within which complete dedication to dogma was the ideal. The Jewish God was never the god of the individual Jew. He was always the god of Israel, of the tribe, of the nation, of ALL Jews. That is why the statement in Psalms reading, "Thou *art* my son; this day have I begotten thee . . ." refers to *Israel*, the whole people, and not to *one* member of the tribe.

Conversely, the Western mind has invariably leaned toward the pantheistic view (the doctrine that the universe, taken or conceived as a whole, is God), with considerable stress on *individuality, personal creativity*, and *innovative freedom* in all things, including religion (the traitors among us have been our power-hungry philosophers, theologians, intellectuals and politicians). Despite the fact that early Christianity drew from all sources in the ancient world, in conjunction with trying to move away from the Jews, Judaism remained at the heart of the faith. Inwardly, the West succumbed to the East. If the White race—people from lands made up of climates ranging from multi-hued Indian summers to enchanted snow-covered vistas, verdant forests teeming with life, and lush agricultural valleys where great harvest moons rise yellow, low and heavy over ripening fields of grain—had spent centuries working at it, they could not have chosen a more dangerously foreign ideology on which to hitch their wagon of theological yearnings.

And so, with the destructive spread of Christianity among the most innovative and productive people in the world, the gentile West chose the *pathological past*—a world peopled with specters, ghosts, demons, devils, myths . . . a world of shrines and altars and wailing walls . . . a world of witch doctors representing the primitive savior god of Galilee and the vindictive Yahweh of the Jews . . . a world of believers fleeing before the specters and illusions of their own creation—over a world of *intellectual curiosity, scientific discovery, flexibility, tolerance,* and *decency*.

When we knelt in the catacombs of Oriental Semitism we welcomed the doctrines of human depravity and unearned guilt. We surrendered our spirit to darkness—to a religion of obsolete theological dogmas instead of a religion rooted in rational human values. We traded creativity and imagination for obscurity of thought, servility, intolerance of disposition and enthusiasm of temper. We traded a world in which reason and reality were finally beginning to be recognized for a world of mysticism in which inevitabilities are always more intriguing than possibilities and irrational conviction always more comfortable than rational doubt.

We turned our backs on Eratosthenes (the chief librarian at the great library of Alexandria that was destroyed by Christians) who correctly deduced the circumference of the earth to a very precise degree (approximately 40,000 kilometers) 2200 years ago. We turned our backs on the Ionian Greek scientists of Miletus, the first to arrive at a purely naturalistic interpretation of the cosmos . . . on Thales, the inventor of much of the geometry of lines later accredited to Euclid—the same Thales who propounded that the sun was not a god but a fiery body (that was over 2500 years ago) . . . on the

physiologi, a school of thinkers following in the footsteps of Thales, who would one day be called physicists . . . on Heron of Alexandria, inventor of gear trains and steam engines and the author of *Automata*, the first book on robots . . . on Archimedes, the greatest mechanical genius until Leonardo da Vinci . . . on Anaximander, an astronomer and geometrician, who propounded that life had been formed in the sea and driven out onto the land and had undergone a progressive evolution (2500 years later the slaves of Christian superstition are still denying the evolutionary process) . . . on Heraclitus who abandoned the eternal, material atoms of his predecessors and substituted "change" as the fundamental reality . . . on Democritus of Thrace, who postulated a large but undetermined number of atoms differing in nature and size, and who conceived the cosmos to be an ordered system wherein worlds are born, grow, decay and perish . . . on Apollonius of Perga, the mathematician who demonstrated the forms of the conic sections—ellipse, parabola and hyperbola—the curves, as we now know, followed in their orbits by the planets, the comets and the stars . . . on Aristarchus of Samos, who argued that the earth is one of the planets, which like them orbits the sun, and that the stars are enormously far away . . . on Herophilus, the physiologist who firmly established that the brain rather than the heart is the seat of intelligence . . . on Dionysius of Thrace who defined the parts of speech and did for the study of language what Thales did for geometry . . . on Alcmaeon and Erasistratus in physiology, Pythagoras in acoustics, Empedocles and Anaxagoras in physics, Strabo in geography and Strato in pneumatics . . . on Protagoras and Socrates and Xenophon and Aristophanes and countless others who were opening up the world of thought in numerous and startling ways destined to transform the modes of thinking and living for most of the human race.

No one can ever begin to assess what the ravings of the prophets and the barren curse of renunciation have cost us—and will continue to cost us for just as long as so many of our people remain fixed and lost in the infantile obsessions of the Christian Judaic system.

But let us suppose for the sake of dissension that the torrents of life had taken a completely different channel nearly two thousand years ago, and that the White race had never been chained to the thing that we call Christianity.

What imagination could describe the unknown regions through which those torrents would flow?

As difficult as it may be to answer this question, it is certainly within the realm of the imagination to speculate that if our ancestors had chosen a religion rooted in their mostly AGRICULTURAL heritage, a religion not of a patriarch alone (not of a matriarch, either), but a religion of the family of both Man and Woman (of both God and Goddess), a religion like a garden, deep and lush and drenched with colors . . . a religion of a strong, kindly, providing Father, and a warm, loving, caring Mother with the head and breast of a goddess and at her breast a beautiful infant . . . a religion presiding over the fructifying powers of the earth and smelling of fruits, pure water, good earth, warm winds, lush forests and fragrant valleys . . . a religion that could only have been compassionate and humane to a degree

unheard of in Oriental Semitism—*we would be living in a completely different world today*.

Instead, our ancestors chose a religion rooted in the DESERT heritage of the Hebrews . . . a religion of the Father alone . . . a religion of the lonely, solitary, childless, unwedded, unloved and remote Yahweh, the world's most vengeful, harsh and merciless deity . . . a religion of the strongbeaked, wild-eyed, terrifying Jeremiah . . . a religion smelling of desert heat and burning earth, hot stones, moistureless hills, lifeless vegetation and a merciless, unforgiving sun.

Even if Marcion and Aristotle (the champion of the human mind) had won, as opposed to Augustine and Plato (the enemy of the human mind), and the Jewish God and the Jewish Bible had been expunged from the Christian creed, we would still be living in a remarkably different world today. To Marcion, God was humane and loving, not ruthless and vengeful, and Jesus was a spiritual apparition who appeared suddenly as an adult and had only the semblance of a man. To Aristotle, the rational investigation of the natural world was paramount, as opposed to a dreadful, mindless dabbling with mysticism. Beliefs of this sort would have resulted in a more loving, less fearful religion—a less paranoid religion, more secure in its ability to attract believers and to hold on to them; the great and enduring qualities of white gentiles—energy and enterprise, foresight and common sense, creative and innovative genius, tolerance and flexibility—would have been given much more play; and, all in all, the result would have been a more tolerant, more flexible, more decent, more humane, and assuredly, a more *productive* society.

Think of it!

We would have "loved the stars too fondly to be fearful of the night," and we would have had the freedom, the courage, and the initiative to "stretch our eyes" and examine not only planets like our earth but some of the vast and uncounted galaxies that lay beyond our home galaxy. We might have done that over 1500 years ago. We might have invented printing at least a thousand years earlier than we did. During that period of time now called the Middle Ages, we might have been building skyscrapers and trains and inventing automobiles and airplanes, and telephones, movies, televisions, and computers and lasers. And we might have been walking on the moon at least 500 years ago.

What did we do instead?

We consolidated society into a universal church and state that was more dead and oppressive than alive and expansive. When the Western world became Christian, it walked from the light of the Roman and Greek civilizations into the universal ignorance, superstitions and depravity of the REGRESSIVE AGES (that period of time encompassing both the Dark and Middle Ages—a period of time beginning in the 4th century when Christianity became a state-sactioned theocracy and ending with the momentous events of the 15th century: the fall of Constantinople, which drove Byzantine scholars with the literature of Greece into Western Europe; the invention of printing; and the rediscovery of America), *eleven centuries* of oppression and regression. Where was the stimulus of multiplicity during those ages? Smothered by totalitarian orthodoxy. Where were variety and emulation?

Discouraged and denounced by the regressive Church. Everywhere, frantic zeal was more important than courageous curiosity. During the Regressive Ages the intellectual energies of Europe cogitated about ghosts, goblins, witches and heresies, and devised countless ways of interpreting God's puzzles. And whenever revolutionary agitation and civil wars were deemed necessary by theological and temporal rulers, biblical texts could always be found (mostly from the Old Testament) that would inflame people with pious blood-lust.

Was there any light at all in the Regressive Ages?

Of course there was!

It would be absurd to suggest that there was not. No matter how repressive the society, the human mind cannot be completely turned off; human ingenuity cannot be completely stifled. The one salient point that must be comprehended, however, is this:

THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH MORE LIGHT IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF WESTERN MAN.

In response to those who grandiloquently rhapsodize about the human advances that were made during the Dark and Middle Ages—*in spite of Christianity*, and everywhere *in inverse proportion to the power of the Church*—I would like to pay homage to all the fine minds—the Aristotles, Galens, Michelangelos, Mozarts, Galileos, and even possibly the Henry Fords, Thomas Edisons, and Neil Armstrongs—who were stunted or deprived or repressed and lost forever because of the anti-mind, pro-supernatural climate of those bleak ages of adversity when the Church cast a gloom upon every innovative or creative idea. (Less than two hundred years ago, Niccolo Paganini had to publish a letter in a newspaper to prove that his violinistic perfection was not due to his being the devil's offspring. Had he been born a little earlier, either he would have been burned at the stake or he would never have been allowed to perfect his talent.)

To the cynic, religions have always been the special preserve of liars living on the backs of fools who are lost in cloudlands of myth and fable. Looking at the issue from a less sardonic viewpoint, religions, like governments, are by their very nature more corrupt than people who exist as individuals outside of collectivistic or bureaucratic cocoons. Since so many of us are loath to act morally or to think for ourselves as individuals, we allow governments and religions to choose the lowest acceptable moral standards for us.

For myself, however, I must admit that I see nothing wrong in a reasonable belief in a decent god who does not predetermine the fate of his helpless creatures and then hold them responsible for their actions. And if organized religions *must* exist, I would prefer to see them evolve out of the very roots of the people who profess to believe in them. What makes Christianity the world's number-one theological aberration is the fact that it involves the fateful attempt to blend two vastly different psychological world views. "These two streams," as Dean Inge describes them, "the Semitic and the European,

the Jewish and the Greek, still mingle their waters in the turbid flood which constitutes the institutional flow side by side in the same bed, perfectly recognizable, so alien are the two types to each other."

To a tragic degree, we in the Western world are still measuring ourselves by the superstitious, childish and sometimes evil explanations of the primitive or ancient mind . . . still clinging in fear to old forms, obsolete ideas, and closed systems . . . still enchanted with all the stocks and stones of the worship of the past . . . still continuing to believe in religious traditions and dogmas that insult man's mind and spirit. (Are there any creatures on earth more pathetic than those white Gentiles—members of the same race that produced Aristotle, Shakespeare and Thomas Jefferson—who spend their lives preaching that the *beginning of wisdom* is the fear of the Jewish God? . . . or that the sins of the *unjust* can only be cleansed with the blood of the *just*?) What we call Christianity today is a kingdom of lies and wishful thinking filled with people who believe in that kingdom through indoctrination. It is a kingdom of deception, a perverse realm, in which knowledge and insight have been warped, and in which spiritual defamation and falsehood rule.

In *Orphans in Gethsemane* Vardis Fisher writes that "if man is ever to build a civilization worthy of that devotion which he seems richly endowed to give, he will first have to accept in the full light of his mind and soul the historical facts of his past, and the mutilations and perversions which his hostility to these facts has made upon his spirit." He is referring, of course, to those perversions and distortions which hostility to fact had made upon their spirit that sent thousands of early Christians fleeing into the desert to torture and debase their flesh and minds in an effort to elevate their souls; or that caused other Christians to put millions of their fellows to torture, dungeons, and flame.

But no one has provided a more incisive indictment of the terrible effects of the Christian-Judaic-Platonist system on the minds and souls of Western man than Homer Smith, an internationally known biologist, and the author of *Man and His Gods*. His words, which I shall quote at length, deserve the closest attention:

> Self-mortification, squalor and physical uncleanliness became esteemed Christian virtues . . . Christianity undermined the family, the unit of the social system, by teaching that celibacy is an exalted virtue; and by its emphasis on continence it directed the sexual impulse into physical and psychological perversions. It dogmatically relegated women to an inferior position . . . It supplanted courage and initiative by resignation: Providence had arranged things in their order, the rich and the poor, the well and the sick, the wise and the ignorant; and to question Providence was to question the wisdom of God. Misery was to be tolerated patiently in anticipation of everlasting glory. It did not esteem either personal or political freedom, and in no case was it prepared to fight for them. By its fallacious philosophy of free will and the countersense of predestination it obliterated education and experience from ethics and obstructed objective inquiry into the

human mind. It rent philosophy by its dualisms of secular and holy, reason and faith, natural and supernatural, good and evil, and by its insistence that uninformed faith is a higher form of knowledge, that no earthly betterment could outweigh the overwhelming issue of salvation or damnation which awaited man after death, it paralyzed all curiosity and intelligent examination of the natural world. For the love of life it substituted the fear of death. For the sense of the dignity of man, fundamental to the precepts of the Stoics and of Cicero, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius and other Roman moralists, it substituted the doctrine of personal inadequacy, the sense of guilt, and the habits of self-doubt and self-abnegation. In its cardinal doctrine of sin, for which it crucified the Christ, it promulgated a belief which was to crucify the whole of the Western world for centuries to come.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

In the Mists

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

(Matthew 11:28–30.)

On the melancholy brow of night glows a tiara grander than any that ever decked mortal beauty, the regal diadem of the ever-running stars, the partially read riddle of the heavenly Sphinx, drawing the eyes and the mind of planet-bound man like slivers of steel to a rapacious magnet.

Gazing upwards at that star-speckled canopy, his consciousness is robed with the coloring of awe and trepidation, and his mind is gorged with questions . . . questions that try his soul . . . a plague of questions to drive him mad.

Whence this wondrous variety of sensations?

Whence these bewildering modes of grouping?

Whence this glorious complex of space-hung, time-strung appearances curtained by darkness?

With what end or meaning is fraught the evolution of the human mind, or that ocean of obscure perception, the soul—transporting its sensations out of itself into philosophical follies fogged with abstractions, theological orgies of word-weaving, noisy dogmas that stammer abjectly and gasp out their lives in the face of the riddle of the universe, marked as little more than transient incidents by Vedas, Puranas, Bibles, Korans, Talmuds?

To what end does the stream of history flow?

What is meant by the word GOD?

Questions . . . that crash like waves against the watch towers of time.

Questions . . . posed by one hardy, surviving twig of a long-gone evolutionary tree . . . MAN . . . his roots and branches having vanished in the mulch of the past; MAN . . . a lonely orphan, on a waif of a planet, hurrying around a colossal sun, lost in a veritable desert of suns more plentiful than the sand-grains that fill the Sahara.

It is said that we are but a mere variation of a single species of a single genus; not one link apart from Great Apeism, but a whole chain of links—dissolved somewhere in the evolutionary time-span—apart; far from perfect,

yet perfect enough to survive, because a too imperfect adaptation to the environment cannot long remain an heir to the earthly kingdom.

And just around the first bend of the mind lurks that most relevant of all questions: WHY? . . . ever there . . . ever probing that central enigma of enigmas . . . the place of the individual in the cradle of the universe in which he stands.

Questions . . .

Is God a potency immanent in the sense that the universe, taken or conceived of as a whole, is God . . . or is God also a transcendent being, a real personality, who can communicate with man and affect his feeling and doing?

Is the representation of God after the highest human morality sufficient to account for everything from the prosperity of the wicked, the crimes of the guilty, the suffering of the innocent and the inconsistency of justice? ("All the goods of life united would not make a very happy man," muses the philosopher David Hume, "but all the ills united would make a wretch indeed.")

Is the thought that is within me the thing itself?

Can the idealized experience be projected into independent absolute reality?

Is the body merely the temple of that "inmost purple spirit of light," the soul?

Is there a future for the individual being in some metaphysical sense?

Is there nothing more than our little world "rounded with a sleep"?

Are we fated to lapse into nonentity with a waning sun and a freezing planet?

Does, or will, conscious individuality yield a satisfactory balance of happiness?

Will the end vindicate the means?

The depth of the longing pervading these questions can be found in the words of Sir Thomas Browne: "Whilst I study to find how I am a microcosm or little world I find myself something more than the great. There is surely a piece of divinity in us; something that was before the elements, and owes not homage unto the sun."

And with the true instinct of genius, a great poet probed in his own special way the enigmatic theory of knowledge:

> Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies;
> Hold you there, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower; but if I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is.

And in our little world, we are not alone.

Looking elsewhere, we find the grave Moslem worshiper in mosques, on housetops, and in the vastness of the desert; the Hindu in his intricately carved temple, the Buddhist before his flower-strewn shrine, the Parsee before the sacred fire, the Sufi or Yogi wrapped in mysticism, the American Indian before the "Great Spirit."

Everywhere we find a longing to depend on a superior spiritual power. Behind the polytheism of the *Edda* we find the "All-Father." Behind the army of Vedic gods we find Brahman, a product of the monotheism which preceded the Vedic polytheism. Nezahualcoyotl, a king of the Mexicans, raised a pyramidal temple to the same "Unknown God" that Paul sought to reveal at Athens. "I am not I; the breath I breathe is God's." Thus speaks Jelal the Sufi.

The striking similarity of belief in supreme spiritual beings found in so many diverse and widely scattered cultures is offered as one of the proofs that religions *are* shaped by divinity and that God *does* exist. But this theory doesn't take into account the fact that human beings, wherever they may be on earth, face the same problems, fears, and in most cases, essentially the same limitations, during the course of their evolutionary development. It isn't unlikely then, that religious and mystical experiences develop along the same motivational and evolutionary lines among all peoples with many variations of the same theme.

In defense of the hopes of Faith, theologians have attempted to mobilize the forces of reason to prove the existence of God through other arguments. The Ontological, the Cosmological, and the Teleological viewpoints are the principal lines of proof generated by this effort.

The ontological argument infers the existence of God from the concepts of Him we are supposed to possess. God exists because we are able to conceive the idea of God. This theory has been dismissed as a "good specimen of theological twaddle." The belief that a real correspondent and *independent* actuality can be realized by way of mere ideas and abstract concepts is far beyond the sunlight of reality. Any one of us can conceive a million dollars, but our bank accounts will not be richer for the effort.

Since the universe is filled with dependent conditioned facts, so runs the cosmological argument, that dependence must be supported by an unconditioned First Cause. The world is; we cannot deny its dependent and contingent existence. We must logically conclude, therefore, that it was called into being, or created, by that ultimate First Cause—God. But let us postulate a different scenario—a hypothesis of infinite complexity; a hypothesis involving not just one universe as we imagine it now, but an infinite number of beginningless and endless universes, each with its own allotment of space within which it conducts its own never-ending cycles of expansions and contractions and big bangs.

In pursuit of this theory, let us suppose ourselves to be earthly sky-watchers plying our wares down through the ages with ever-increasing powers of telescopic vision.

When, finally, we were able to see beyond our own tiny solar system to the extent that we could penetrate the Milky Way, we found that we were a small part of an awesome galaxy filled with billions of stars or suns with vast distances separating them. And we found that our little planet Earth was a tiny speck belonging to a small sun lost in the outer reaches of that galaxy.

Then, finally, when our vision reached out of our home galaxy, we saw in deep interstellar space tiny points of light. But they were not stars. We found to our amazement that each dot of light was a great galaxy of stars

instead, some smaller, some even larger than our own Milky Way, and all part of a great universe of galaxies. And, once again, vast, mind-boggling distances were involved.

Our vision has not yet reached the edge of what we might call our home universe; perhaps it never will. But if it does, we may once again see tiny points of light in even deeper regions of interstellar space, with each light turning out to be, not just a galaxy, but a vast universe of galaxies—all part of a greater multiverse of universes. And someday, if we last long enough, our vision may even reach beyond the boundaries of our home multiverse—and, once again, we may see tiny points of light . . . far, far, away . . .

And on . . . and on . . . and on . . .

As infinite and confounding as is the complexity with which we are trying to deal, there are some who find it easier to believe that the universe always was and always will be than it is to believe that it was brought into being out of nothing by some absolutely necessary and independent "sum-total of all Reality and Perfection," or God.

Since there is *design* in the universe—in the paths of the stars that can be charted, in the predictable laws of nature, in the irreversibility of the forces of life and death—there must be a divine *designer*, or creator—a God. And this brings us to the physico-theological argument which is based on the supposed indications of design in nature. But there is no *proof* that design, even where admitted, indicates of necessity a *conscious* designer or designers. Those who accept the "design" proposition must do so on faith alone.

One more point of view is worth observing. The proof of the existence of a Deity stands or falls with the proof of the moral nature of man. Promptings of "righteousness" are held as indicative of a supreme being. What, however, of "immoral" promptings? Presumably, that is one of the reasons why the Prince of Darkness was invented. Our unholy motivations can then be held as indicative of Satan, thus conveniently letting God off the hook regarding the existence of evil. It is relevant to note here that, for a long time, the Hebrews had no concept of Satan. In II Samuel 24:1, King David is punished for performing a sinful deed that God caused him to do in the first place. Sometime later, when the author of I Chronicles begins his version of this story, he obviously rebels at the idea of the Jewish God being so unjust; so he has Satan incite David to commit the sin that God punished him for (assuming that the passage in question isn't a product of Christian revising). In this way, Satan was conveniently introduced by a more imaginative author to account for the tragic and unjust things in life.

Regardless of the rationalizations that favor Father God and ultimately Mother Church, the salient fact remains that our religions are rooted in the distant, primitive past. From the pains of fear rose ghost-worship and fetishism among savages, heralding countless other religious illusions to shingle the metaphysical roof of the human species. We are linked by the invisible strands of heredity to the billion-year chain of evolution that has preceded us. We are constrained by the limits of our emotional development to genuflect before the altars of our primeval ancestors. And our philosophies, rooted as they are in the elitism of our finest minds, are of little help to the

vast majority of us—to which anyone who has wrestled with the Leibnizian monad can attest.

Man is a lost and lonely orphan inhabiting a circumrotatory laboratory of living and dying named Earth. Materially, he may be very little more than a whoop and a hollo from the stone age. Emotionally, he may still be there. He has yet to emerge from the cocoon of his emotional illiteracy. That is why his religious cults leave so much to be desired; why his faiths abound with virgin births and savior-gods and miracles; why he is so strongly drawn to the "All-Father" God, on the one hand, and the substitute Son-of-God/Savior-God, on the other.

The deepest search in life for a lonely, abandoned orphan is his search to find a father. Man projects the best he has onto God, explains Erich Fromm, in a moment of reasonable contemplation unsullied by socialist silliness. He worships an idealized image of his father. As a result, he impoverishes himself. The more he elevates the image to splendor, the more worthless he feels as a human being. But God is a distant father, a difficult father to reach. (An idealized parent—including a Heavenly father—can neither be respected nor loved.) "There is in God," someone once said, "a deep and dazzling darkness." "Oh God," murmurs the cynic, "it is not your wrath I fear, but your silence." Some Christian theists, adept at the art of rationalization, have championed the belief that a God past finding out is the ideal: "A God understood would be no God at all." So an intermediary is needed, a "Son of God," a Savior-God, a Messiah, a cult hero, someone more personable, more understandable, more accessible—and yet a God.

When man discovered his share of the act of procreation, he found a platform upon which to build the idea of hero formation, including the savior-god hero. The nobility and tragic fall of the hero who comes to grief through his own presumption and the guilt arising therefrom is the nucleus of all mythical religious tradition. It is an ever-recurring myth at various levels of human development.

But what is myth?

Is it folklore? Or is it an effort to explain a custom or belief whose origins have been forgotten? Is it a product of the folkmind? Is it an intermediate between collective dreams and collective poems? Does it create for itself a collective symptom for taking up all repressed emotion? Is it another way of saying that emotion will create for human yearning those goals which mind cannot establish as fact? Is it a way of ordering and accepting the shocking facts of life rather than disguising or evading them? Is it the pious formula into which life flows when it reproduces its traits out of the unconscious? Does it correspond to the displaced residues of wish fantasies of entire nations?

Who knows for sure? There are many definitions of myth. But we do know that it does seem to be everywhere in all times. Look around and you can observe the creation of legend which myth absorbs. The legend of FDR. The legend of the Kennedy's Camelot. The legend of Lee Harvey Oswald.

The Christians have spent nearly twenty centuries elaborating on and in some instances refining ancient myths, and these procedures will probably continue into the distant future.

The principal myth of the Western world is not God or the Mother but

what we call the Christ: that is, the myth, found with practically all ancient peoples, of the deliverer, the savior, and with all but the Jews, "the sacrificial offering on the fructifying tree."

That is why the legend of Jesus Christ the "scapegoat" is with us today . . . why so many reach out so desperately for the Messiah who "died for our sins" . . . why Jesus the Christ is a convenient substitute for God the Father.

Who is Jesus?

Virtually all thoughtful humans have asked this question.

"Yea, though I had known of the Christ after the flesh," cried Paul, "Yet now would I know such a Christ no more."

"We must not confound the Nazarene," counseled the fine French scholar, Guignebert, "with the ideal which he has come to represent since the birth of the Christian dogma."

"The religion *of* Jesus," said Professor B. W. Bacon, "must be accepted, if at all, on authority. The religion *about* Jesus is eternally self-verifying because it is a religion of the Spirit."

"He is beautiful, strong, and good," observed P. L. Couchoud, "because of the multitudes of men who have given him the best of themselves."

Beautiful is Tschaikovsky's tribute: "What eternal poetry and, touching to tears, what feeling of love and pity toward mankind in the words: 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden.'"

"He has come to us as one unknown," said Albert Schweitzer. "Without a name, as of old, by the lakeside, he came to those who knew him not. He speaks to us the same word: 'Follow me,' and sets us to the tasks which he has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey him, whether they be wise or simple, he will reveal himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in his fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience who he is."

How lovely . . . how poetic . . . how mystical.

But what bearing does it all have on reality?

Whatever goodness and gentleness may be involved in some degree or other in the folk-soul projection that has evolved solely out of human wishes and needs and ideals, must we forever continue to live in the world of the myth?

Is the myth worth the ignorance, the superstitions, and the cruel oppressions that must inevitably follow the molding of a fierce and unbending dogma? Is the myth worth the horrors which it always calls down upon those who believe it?

Again, the honest scholar must answer, "A thousand times, NO!"

"The Christian poets created a poem-myth," as Vardis Fisher explains it. "The theologians reduced it to dogma. Now it is only another superstition."

And yet . . .

And yet . . . the simple story of a winsome teacher filled with feeling of love and pity for mankind provides us with a disturbing and haunting vision. If some humane, gentle and idealistic Jesus-type person *did* live in the ancient world, we know *nothing at all* of his personality and *nothing at all* of the facts of his life, his teaching and his career. We know only that

whatever his genuine teaching may have been, *it did not survive him*. We know that the Christian religion could not have been the religion of *that* Jesus. We know that enthusiasm engendered Christianity, but we know that it was the enthusiasm of the disciples, and the fanatics and the power-brokers who followed, and not the enthusiasm of *that* Jesus.

It is easy to understand why so many people find it reassuring and warming to the very soul to believe in *that* Jesus . . . to believe that such a human being may have graced the human race with his presence . . . to believe that the spirit of the Teacher still lives like the morning and the evening, and hope in the souls of men and women everywhere.

Who hasn't meditated in his quietest moments on such a vision?

Perhaps the most fitting epitaph to the memory of *that* Jesus can be found in the words of First Corinthians:

> Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

And so at last, each of us in his own time must search for the import of the individual in the universe; and each of us in his own way must confront the myth; and each of us must live with his own "moment of truth."

Did Jesus live?

Was there once a lonely shepherd who wandered among the common people and said, "Come with me," and who preached that there was a place even for them in the Kingdom of the Father?

Was he drawn not only to the poor but to the dumb and the blind, the epileptic and the paralytic, the insane, the leprous, the old, the sick?

Did he weep over the beggar's filth, the leper's sores, the slave's torment?

Did he long to teach or at least to console and comfort the multitudes of suffering people?

Was he followed by people who wondered secretly if he might be the Messiah?

And was there a time when they gathered around him begging him to cast demons out, to heal wounds, to raise friends from the dead, to bring manna down from heaven?

Did he treat women without scorn, without contempt, in a world where women were chattels to be bought and sold, to be used and abused, and to be *blamed* for the Fall of Man?

Did he walk alone in the Judean night and watch for signs of falling stars—long arcs of golden fire—and wonder if the Messiah would really come before the ninth day of the Jewish month of Ab, as many thought, or on the concluding day of the Feast of the Ingathering, or on the Day of Atonement, or at the Passover?

Did he stand alone, apart and unobserved in the back of a synagogue one day and shudder at the thought of the vindictive and merciless Jewish God?

Did he turn away from the God of the Torah who chose Jews to be a special people above all other people upon the face of the earth?

Did he dream of a Father in heaven, a Father of *all* people, of Israel and of the lands beyond Israel; of the sick and the oppressed as well as of the

rich; of the slaves as well as their masters; and of the ignorant as well as those who teach them?

Was he once there by the sea in Galilee?

In Gethsemane did he kneel heartbroken and pray?

And did he walk the final mile of his life under the burden of a heavy wooden beam to which his hands would be fastened?

Many indeed—including scholars, theologians, philosophers and poets—are those who have asked these questions; and many are those who have sought to provide us with answers.

But for intelligent human beings who are objective enough to face the truth, and courageous enough to live without the myth, it remains for America's greatest historical novelist, Vardis Fisher, to provide the answer, in words both plaintively philosophical and compassionately wise, that may be the nearest to the truth:

> We can never know. It is all gone in the mists now, it is all gone; it is all lost to us, it is nostalgia, it is heartache; it is hope and yearning and eyes misted over . . . We can never know now, for the past has closed over it, as the grave closes over the beloved, and all is swallowed in the mists, but memory; and the memory itself fades and pales and at last is gone, is gone . . .

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CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1500–1400	Migration of first *Habiru* tribes to Palestine
1250	Leah tribes having the name Isra-el (ruled by God) established in Canaan and Palestine
1050–937	United Kingdom
937–721	Divided Kingdom
750	Earliest biblical histories, E. and J.
650	Deuteronomy (in the main)
597	First Captivity
586	Fall of Jerusalem; second Captivity
549	Beginning of Cyrus conquests
538	Cyrus in Babylon; first return of Exiles
520	Temple begun at Jerusalem
516	Temple completed
444	Law, as in Pentateuch, accepted
332	Alexander; beginning of Greek period
198	Antiochus III conquers Palestine
176	Antiochus IV Epiphanes
170	Temple plundered
168	Temple desecrated; Maccabean revolt
165	Temple rededicated
134–104	John Hyrcanus I
104–103	Aristobulus
103–76	Alexander Janneus
63	Conquest of Palestine by Pompey
39–4	Herod the Great
8–4 B.C.	Purported birth of Jesus
6 A.D.	Judea a Roman province
26–28	Messianic prophecies of John the Baptist
28–30	Purported ministry of Jesus
50–62	Purported literary activity of Paul
52–66	Frequent outbreaks in Palestine
66	Outbreak of Jewish War
70	Fall of Jerusalem

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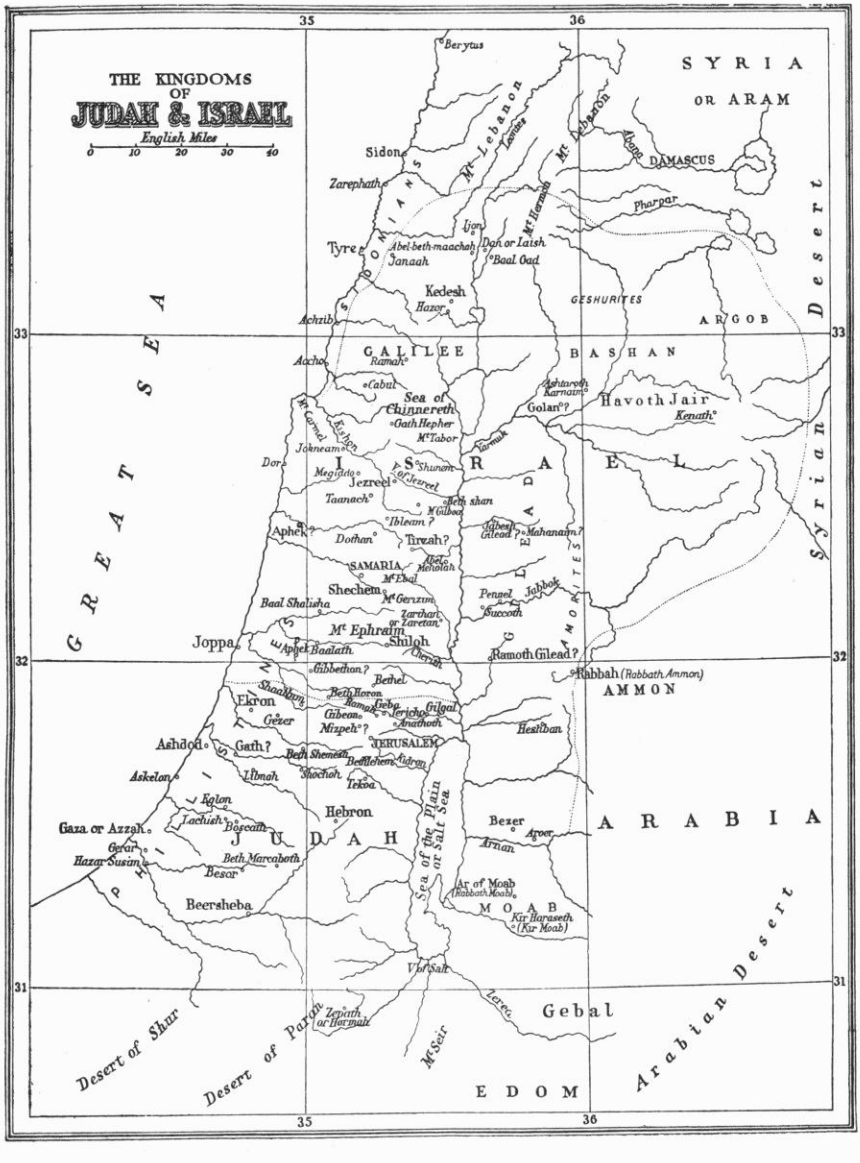
THE KINGDOMS
OF
JUDAH & ISRAEL
English Miles
0 10 20 30 40
SYRIA
OR ARAM
DAMASCUS
Berytus
Sidon
Zarephath
Tyre
Abel-beth-maachah
Janoah
Ijon
Dan or Laish
Baal Gad
Kedesh
Hazor
Achzib
Acco
GALILEE
Ramah
Cabul
Sea of Chinnereth
Gath Hepher
Mt Tabor
Jokneam
Megiddo
Jezreel
Taanach
Dor
Aphek
Dothan
Tirzah
SAMARIA
Mt Ebal
Shechem
Mt Gerizim
Baal Shalisha
Mt Ephraim
Shiloh
Joppa
Aphek
Baalath
Ekron
Gezer
Ashdod
Gath
Askelon
Libnah
Kaylon
Lachish
Gaza or Azzah
Gerar
Hazar Susim
Besor
Beersheba
Hebron
JUDAH
Beth Shemesh
Bethlehem
Adullam
Shochoh
Tekoa
Gibeon
Mizpeh
Gibeah
Geba
Jericho
Anathoth
Gilgal
Ramah
Beth Horon
Shaalbim
Aijalon
Hebron
Bethel
JERUSALEM
Sea of the Plain or Salt Sea
Vbl Salt
Zeredah
Zephath or Hormah
Mt Seir
EDOM
Gebal
Bezer
Aroer
Arnon
Ar of Moab
(Rabbah Moab)
MOAB
Kir Haraseth
(Kir Moab)
Rabbah (Rabbath Ammon)
AMMON
Ramoth Gilead
Heshbon
Pennel
Jabbok
Succoth
Mahanaim
Gilead
Jabesh Gilead
Iblean
Beth shan
Mt Gilboa
Shunem
Yr Kerel
Zarthan or Zaretan
Beth Meholah
Aphek
Hibbethah
Beth Horon
Ramah
Mt Carmel
Kishon
Jordan
Jabbok
Yarmuk
Ashtaroth Karnaim
Golan
Havoth Jair
Kenath
GESHURITES
ARGOB
BASHAN
GREAT SEA
PHILISTINES
ISRAEL
GADITES
AMORITES
Syrian Desert
Arabian Desert
Desert of Shur
Desert of Paran
ARABIA
Mt Lebanon
Mt Hermon
Mt Abarim
Abana
Pharpar
Zered
Arnon
Jordan
Jabbok
Yarmuk
Kishon
Mt Carmel
Mt Gilboa
Mt Ebal
Mt Gerizim
Mt Ephraim
Mt Tabor
Mt Seir
35
36
33
32
31

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THE LATE GREAT BOOK THE BIBLE

The renewed fashionability of Christianity has once again drawn attention to that bulky tome of "Holy Writ": the Bible.

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